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THE HOME OF THE ECHOES

BY

F. W. BOREHAM

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

RANGITUA, the tawny young son of Tutanekai the brave, and of Hinemoa the fair—both of them renowned in Maori story—stood on a projecting shelf of rock, overlooking one of those wild and desolate ravines that characterize the romantic ranges of Waikato. Hurrying in front of his father, the supple-sinewed stripling had scrambled to the dizzy eminence that he now so proudly occupied, and called back to Tutanekai, who was still engaged on the difficult and painful ascent. To the lad's astonishment, his voice came back to him from a dozen different directions. A moment later father and son were perched together on the overhanging rock, surveying the panorama of rugged grandeur spread out before them.

'And where,' asked Rangitua, 'where is the *home* of the echoes?'

Tutanekai pointed straight at his son's heart.

'There, my son,' he answered slowly, 'is the home of the echoes! No heart, no voice, no echo!'

That Maori philosophy is sound. 'If we meet no gods,' says Emerson, 'it is because we harbor none. If there is grandeur within us, we shall find grandeur in porters and in sweeps.' If any man, projecting his thought into the pleasant themes

that I have here suggested, hears voices calling to him from the printed page, let him be sure that his own heart is the home of the echoes he has started. If the home were not worthy of the echoes, the echoes would never have come to the home.

FRANK W. BOREHAM.

Armadale, Melbourne, Australia,
Easter, 1921.

PART I

I

SECOND-HAND THINGS

Hester Spanton—Auntie Hester, as everybody called her—was the tenant of a large second-hand store and a small asthmatic body. I used at times to think that the adjectives might be regarded as interchangeable. If you had described her as the occupant of an asthmatic store and a second-hand body, the terms would have seemed perfectly congruous and fitting. Her poor little body looked a very second-hand affair. It was terribly the worse for wear, and was so battered and broken that Auntie Hester could only crawl about by the aid of a crutch. It gave you the impression that it had been bought and sold over and over again, and that, having got it cheaply, none of its owners had taken any care of it. I could fancy that I saw Auntie Hester buying it at some dusty old auction-mart, not because she thought that it was strong or beautiful, but just because it was within the reach of her slender purse. Perhaps, I said to myself, perhaps she got it for a song: I have heard of such things; and Auntie was always singing.

And as to the store, it was asthmatic enough in all conscience. As soon as you stepped across the

threshold, the boards creaked and groaned beneath your weight. It was a long, lofty, draughty old place; it was littered with the accumulation of ages; and the wind, as it rushed through, touched a thousand queer old things that hung suspended from the ceiling, and set them chattering and shivering. As you edged your way up the narrow lane that wound its tortuous course from the front door to the foot of the gloomy staircase that led up to Auntie Hester's parlor, you felt that everything was in distress. You had to keep both eyes wide open, or, like a dragoon rushing on to an enemy bayonet, you found yourself impaled on the leg of a recumbent dinner-table, or pulled up short by the butt-end of an unemployed curtain pole, or caught by the coat-tail in the fanciful fretwork of an unsuspected bedstead. That path through the store was full of snares and pitfalls; I never breathed freely till I was once more on the street. Try as you might, you could not avoid bumping against disconsolate pieces of ill-used furniture, crazy assortments of rusty ironware, and huge piles of cracked and dusty crockery. If you swerved aside to evade a decrepit old book-case on the right, you knocked down a rat-trap on the left; and, if you stooped to pick it up, you were sure to become involved with a noisy group of fire-irons. And all the way from the street to the stairs, everything that you touched scrouped and muttered as though in pain. A wheezy old place was Aunt Hester's

store. I heave a sigh of relief as I reflect that, in reviving these unamiable memories, I am but calling up the ghosts of things that were. For Auntie Hester's little second-hand body no longer hobbles about on a crutch; it is at rest. And the asthmatic old store, with its freight of decrepitude; its aches and its pains, its creaks and its groans, is silent too. I cannot think of Auntie Hester without thinking of the green, green grass under which we laid her when her cough had done its worst; and I cannot think of that dingy and cavernous old store without thinking of the red, red flames in which I saw it disappear. A few weeks after Auntie Hester had gone out of the front door for the last time, the rickety old place caught fire, and I, for one, clapped my hands as I saw it blaze!

'It reminds me of the Old Curiosity Shop!' remarked Fred Jarvis as we stood together on the pavement opposite and watched the flames at work.

'It reminds me of the Universe!' I replied; and the more I reflect upon that impulsive utterance of mine, the less do I feel inclined to retract it. We elbow our way through life pretty much as I used to edge my difficult way through Auntie Hester's store; and nearly all the things about us are second-hand things. The trivialities of life may be new, or comparatively new, but the big things, the essential things, the things that really matter, are all of them second-hand. This little lamp that

sheds its soft radiance over my desk is new; it came straight from the warehouse to my study. But of what importance is this lamp? What would it matter to the world if it sputtered out, never to be relit? But the lamp by which my path is lit all day, the lamp that burns in heaven's eternal noon, is second-hand. None of the goods and chattels in Aunt Hester's store were as second-hand as it. Alfred the Great used it; Julius Cæsar used it; the Pharaohs used it; the first man used it as he woke from his eternal sleep and gazed upon the beauty of the world. What, I say, would it matter if this new lamp upon my desk were to go out? But if that second-hand lamp suddenly sputtered out, it would be the end of everybody!

And now, like the image that the photographer sees appearing on the sensitive plate as he washes it in the developer, the principle underlying this matter begins to emerge. If I want a very small thing —a pen or a pencil—it never occurs to me to go to a second-hand store; I send direct to the stationer's, and buy a new one. If I want a medium-sized thing—a house or a shop—I hesitate as to whether I shall buy or build; I weigh the comparative merits of a new one and a second-hand one. But if I want a big thing—a sun or a moon or a star—it never occurs to me to seek a new one; I take a second-hand one and think myself lucky to get it. The second-hand things are the big things; it is the second-hand things that matter. Every

morning a second-hand sun shines out of a second-hand sky, upon a second-hand earth, and bids me tread with a brave step life's second-hand roads. The paths along which I shall move have been worn by generations that have dropped into their graves. The language that I shall speak and write is a second-hand language; Shakespeare used it, and even in his time it was not new. All through the day I shall be buying and selling; but I shall be buying and selling with second-hand money; many of the coins will bear the image and superscription of monarchs long departed. And when, at the close of the day, I turn wearily homewards, the second-hand sun will sink behind the second-hand hills; and the second-hand stars will light up the darkness of my night. There are millions of them; they were none of them made specially for me; they guided pilgrims across the desert before our civilization began; they marked out a path on the high seas for sailors who have been dead for centuries; they are all second-hand, those stars of mine; they are all second-hand, and they are none the worse for that.

Indeed, I think they are all the better. 'Certain things are good for nothing until they are kept a long time,' says the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, 'and some are good for nothing until they have been long kept—and used.' He instances three —a meerschaum pipe, a violin, and a poem. He describes a well used meerschaum pipe, with its brown

autumnal hue. 'He who inhales its vapors,' he avers, 'takes a thousand whiffs in a single breath; and one cannot touch it without awakening the old joys that hang around it—the cumulative wealth of its fragrant reminiscences.' He passes to the violin. Here is an instrument which, many years ago, an eminent old master bequeathed to a passionate young enthusiast who made it whisper his hidden love, cry his inarticulate longings, scream his untold agonies, and wail his monotonous despair. In course of time it finds its way into lonely prisons with improvident artists; into convents from which arose, day and night, the holy hymns with which its tones were blended; and back again to orgies in which it learned to howl and laugh as if a legion of devils were shut up in it. And so, by the time that it falls into our hands, its pores are full of music, and it is stained, like the meerschaum, through and through, with the concentrated hue and sweetness of all the harmonies which have kindled and faded on its strings. And coming to the poem, the Autocrat argues that the poem is nothing at all —a mere sound breathed on the vacant air—when we hear it for the first time. But let the poem be repeated aloud and murmured over in the mind's muffled whisper often enough, and at length the parts become knit together in such absolute solidarity that you could not change a syllable without the whole world's crying out against you for meddling with the harmonious fabric.

But we have descended somewhat. Until the Autocrat brought us down to the level of pipes and fiddles and poems we were dealing with suns and moons and stars. Let us leave the pipes and get back to the planets. The principle is the same. If the music of the old violin is the sweeter for the pathos and the tragedy that have saturated its soul, how much sweeter to us must be the music of the spheres when we reflect upon the smiles and the tears that those spheres have witnessed. We are all affected by the law of association. What can be more significant than our craving for notable historic sites? The passion may become morbid, as when we rush to the scene of a crime or pay for admission to a Chamber of Horrors. Or, on the other hand, it may become sublime, as when we stand, with heads bared in adoration, among the sacred sites of the Holy Land. And yet, critically scrutinized, there is little or nothing in it. It forms a link, a tie, a bond, that is all; but we are unwilling to let such bonds be broken. Is it not with some such feeling that I look out upon the universe? I like to think that those stars are the very same stars that comforted Israel in the wilderness; I like to think that that sun is the sun that David saw when he likened it to a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; I like to think that that moon is the self-same moon that illumined the dread horror of Gethsemane! Like those trifles of which the Autocrat speaks, these vast

orbs are all the better for having been used. It is true that I am living in a second-hand universe; but I like it all the better on that account.

I certainly like this world all the better on that account. I have often thought that it must have been rather embarrassing to have had the world new. The situation of a young bride who has had no experience of housekeeping is positively enviable as compared with the situation of the first man on the planet. He had to find out everything for himself. He must have spent a considerable portion of his time in making experiments, many of them disastrous and most of them painful. Fancy having to find out which of all the things growing about him were good to eat! And then, having divided the edible from the inedible, he had to subdivide the edible into classes. These things are good to eat raw and these are good to eat cooked! These are good to eat in large quantities and these are good to eat in small quantities! These are good to eat as food and these are good to eat as medicine! And so on. I shudder as I think of the ordeal that fell to the lot of the man who had the world all to himself when it was new. I am thankful that these experiments were all made, and these riddles all solved, long before I appeared on the planet. I have inherited the wisdom of all the ages. My world, I am glad to say, is a second-hand one.

When, however, I have said all that there is to

be said in praise of second-hand things, it still remains true that there are things that nobody would buy second-hand. Who, for example, would invest in a second-hand toothbrush? There are a few things that a man must monopolize. Those things must be his own. He would not like to think that they ever have had, or ever would have, another owner.

A second-hand conscience is always a mistake, yet comparatively few people go in for a new one. Most people accept the verdict of the multitude. They feel that certain things are right because the crowd applauds them, and that other things are wrong because the crowd condemns.

A second-hand faith is just as bad; yet numbers of us are content to take over, from someone in whom we have confidence, a faith that is well-worn or out-worn. I have a profound admiration for those Samaritans who, on the witness of the woman at the well, went to hear Jesus and then said to her: 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world!' They tentatively accepted her testimony; a second-hand faith is better than no faith at all. But the second-hand faith only fired them with an insatiable longing for a new one. So they went direct to the Saviour! And now behold them tossing their second-hand faiths to the scrap-heap and joyously exhibiting their new ones! Why, I wonder, did

Jesus tell His disciples to remember Lot's wife? Was it not because He recognized that petrified pillar on the highway as a monument to the fact that a gregarious religion is essentially a precarious religion? She simply went with the rest; she followed the crowd; her faith was a second-hand faith!

Some of us go in for second-hand visions. The Old Testament has a striking and dramatic story of a brave young prophet to whom a vision came. It was perfectly clear, and, with remarkable daring and fine devotion, he proceeded to obey it. But an old prophet, who had lost his visions long ago, assured the young enthusiast that an angel had told him that the younger man was to do the very thing that the vision had forbidden. The young prophet had to choose between his own first-hand vision and the elder prophet's second-hand one. He chose the second-hand one; wrecked his life work; and perished miserably.

George Whitefield saw the force of all this. In 1738 he embarked for America. In the downs there lay at anchor two vessels, one outward and one homeward bound. The outward-bound ship numbered Whitefield among its passengers; the homeward-bound ship had John Wesley on board. Wesley had looked forward to enjoying the inspiration of Whitefield's companionship in England, and was deeply mortified at finding him on his way to America. After praying about it, he sent a message to Whitefield; 'I asked counsel of God,'

he wrote, 'and the answer is that you are to return to London!' 'If the Lord wants me to return to London,' said Whitefield, 'let Him tell *me* so! Why should He tell Mr. Wesley?' He declined to receive a second-hand vision, and, to the end of his days, he believed that he decided rightly.

I have just witnessed a striking exhibition of the advantage of new things over second-hand ones. I have been reading the autobiographies of the early Methodist preachers. I cannot sufficiently admire the astute statesmanship, the spiritual sagacity that led John Wesley to insist that these men should place their experiences on record. But the thing that has most impressed me is that these old testimonies are all brand-new. I confess with sorrow that I have been at testimony-meetings that reminded me for all the world of Auntie Hester's store! All the experiences were obviously second-hand experiences. There was no spark of novelty, of originality, of individuality anywhere. The testimonies were as much alike as peas in a pod. I wished that somebody would jump up and say something new—something all his own. But, alas, it was the same old story, over and over and over again. I turn with a sigh of relief from this vast assortment of second-hand things to these testimonies lying on my table.

'I was hastening on to eternal destruction when the great tremendous God met me like a lion in the way,' says John Haime.

'I had a hell in my conscience,' he says again, with a groan.

'I went to my tent that night,' says Sampson Staniforth, 'seeing all my sins stand in battle array against me!'

'In those days,' says Thomas Olivers, 'my conscience stared me dreadfully in the face!'

'I felt,' says George Shadford, who is in some respects the most attractive of them all, 'I felt as though I had been stabbed to the heart by a sword!'

'I found,' he says again, 'the Judgment seat set up in my conscience; and there I was—tried, found guilty, and condemned!'

It is a great thing, a very great thing, to have entered at first-hand into such poignant and profound experiences as these! It is a great thing, a very great thing, to be able to record them with such skill! Few of us know how, with honesty, simplicity, and modesty, to lay bare the inner secrets of the soul. I felt concerning these men as Macaulay felt concerning the Puritans, that 'instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on His intolerable brightness, and to commune with Him face to face.'

Face to face!

Life at first-hand!

I feel as I leave the society of such men that I am millions of miles from Auntie Hester's dusty store.

II

THE KINGFISHER

NUMBERS of people drive up to the gates of heaven and turn away disillusioned and disappointed. They think that, after all, there is nothing there. I saw something of the kind happen only yesterday. Near this suburban home of mine is a long straight road that seems to run from world's end to world's end. Trudging homeward, along this road, with my back to the south, the other evening, a very curious and very suggestive train of reflection suddenly swept into my mind. It occurred to me that, twice or thrice every week, I find myself tramping homeward along this great high road, and always with my back to the south. Never once had my afternoon's visiting taken me in a northerly direction. This set me thinking. Are there, I said to myself, are there no thickly-settled residential areas away to the north like those with which I am so familiar to the south? And then again, I have often driven along the road in a southerly direction on my way to other suburbs. Does the road to the north lead to none? Why, in keeping my appointments in all parts of the city and its environs, have I never had occasion to turn my face that way? Such cogitations soon threw me into a fever of curiosity.

'Curiosity,' a Portuguese proverb declares, 'is a woman's curse.' To extract the treasure concealed in a vase, your only course is to turn the vessel upside down. To extract the truth concealed in a proverb, it is necessary, as a rule, to pursue a similar policy. If the Portuguese affirm that curiosity is a woman's curse, you simply invert the epigram as you invert the vase, and out pours the truth! And the truth is that curiosity is not a curse at all, and that there is nothing exclusively or peculiarly feminine about it. The world owes more than it can ever acknowledge to the instinct of curiosity; and so do I. It was curiosity that sent the great navigators across the vast and solitary seas; it was curiosity that led, after centuries of heroic but fruitless adventure, to the conquest of the poles; it was curiosity that drove the restless feet of our pathfinders and pioneers across the great continents that they unlocked and explored. It was curiosity that led James Watt to watch his kettle, and Benjamin Franklin to watch his kite. Curiosity a curse, indeed, and a woman's curse, forsooth! What nonsense we pack into proverbs! And so here was I traipsing wearily homeward along the great high road, yet extending the hospitality of my heart to a truly noble guest. I threw open every chamber of my soul to Curiosity, the most bountiful and beneficent visitor that the human mind can entertain. What can there possibly be, I asked myself, along the road to the north? Why do I never turn my face to

the north? I promised this honored guest of mine that I would follow him upon a journey of investigation. And yesterday afternoon I kept my word.

To the north the houses were, as I had surmised, very few and very far between. They were for the most part palatial residences, standing in extensive grounds, with spacious lawns, magnificent conservatories and winding carriage drives. These stately homes were, in several instances, separated from each other by vacant lands in which the virgin bush still luxuriated, in which big brown opossums and little grey squirrels frolicked unmolested, and in the wooded recesses of which we heard a jackass laughing. A few steps farther on, we heard the sound of wheels behind us and a motor car dashed by. It vanished in the archway of trees ahead of us; but a few minutes later we met it returning, and we soon discovered why. Emerging from the thick-set avenue of dark firs that had temporarily concealed the car from our gaze, we came out upon open country; and there, just ahead of us, a wooden fence crossed the highway. It was a blind road! It led to nowhere! We understood why the people in the motor car had so quickly returned. They had come to the gates of paradise and had turned back disappointed. They fancied there was nothing there. It is part of life's tremendous pathos that we hurry through it, forming, as we go, such hasty and cruel judgments.

We leaned for a moment against the fence inspecting the country beyond. There was a steep bank, and, down the bank, some trees; but what lay beyond the trees we could not see. And that noble guest who never accepts the hospitality of the heart without immeasurably enriching it, took possession of my soul. I was in a torment of curiosity. What did those trees conceal? What did that valley hold? The hunger of my heart reflected itself in the wistfulness on the faces of my companions. The fence? What are mountains for but to be climbed? What are oceans for but to be sailed? What are rivers for but to be crossed? We clambered through the fence and descended the slope beyond it. And down in the valley we came out upon one of those idyllic scenes that one would go many a long mile to enjoy. A bend of the sinuous river wound round the foot of the hill. The great willows along the banks draped the tranquil waters in a fringe of exquisite green. The long flowing tresses of the trees dipped into the river, breaking its tranquil surface, revealing the flow of the tide, and imparting a sense of vivacity to water that might otherwise have appeared sluggish. Swallows darted hither and thither, describing graceful circles in the air around us, playing hide and seek amid the drooping drapery of the willows, and skimming with amazing skill the surface of the water. Sometimes, greatly daring, they would just touch it as they passed, starting eddying circles as mementoes

of their passage. We sat in perfect silence for awhile, resting after our walk, and drinking in the manifold beauties of this tranquil scene.

Then, suddenly, as though to bring its charms to the point of absolute perfection, a still more vivid splash of color was added to the picture. We became conscious of a rustle of wings beside us, and then, on the branch of a wattle less than thirty feet away, there settled a most glorious kingfisher. The dazzling luster of his brilliantly blue plumage glittered in the soft light of the afternoon sun. He sat for a few minutes on the branch before us, and then, seeing something more attractive in the shining waters below, he darted down, and we watched him sweep along the course of the river and vanish round the bend of the stream. But, to complete our felicity, he came back again and resumed his vigil on the selfsame bough. For a change, he faced us this time, so that we might admire his snow-white throat and the nut-brown feathers on his breast and head. The kingfisher imparted a touch of real distinction to the lovely glen. It was the finishing touch. As I have elsewhere pointed out, we humans are in love with life; and, no matter how fascinating or romantic a scene may be, it is never quite complete unless, somewhere within its sweep, a living, breathing, sentient creature takes its place. We love life and cannot rest content without it. The kingfisher looked as though he knew it, and seemed loath to leave the bough. The sun,

sinking behind the willows, withdrew the luster from the gorgeous hues of his radiant breast. A moment later, feeling, perhaps, that the glory had departed, he himself flew away; and we felt that it was time for us to go. We scrambled up the slope, and, in negotiating the fence at the top, felt sorry for the people in the motor-car. They had gone home to tell their friends that they had been to the end of the road and had found that there was nothing there! Nothing there! Just a fence and nothing more! I can see them sitting at dinner an hour or two later. The ladies are robed now in their beautiful evening gowns; the most exquisite gems flash and sparkle in their hair. The table, with its costly glass and glittering plate, its soft lights and its delicately tinted flowers, is a dream of luxurious splendor. And, over their fish, they repeat the story of their ridiculous adventure. They had been the dupes of a blind road! They had followed the long, straight highway for miles, only to find that it led to nowhere! I can hear their boisterous laughter as they tell of their fruitless spin. It was a blind road! It led to nowhere! There was nothing there! They came to a fence and had to turn! So true is it that numbers of people drive up to the gates of paradise and turn away disillusioned and disappointed. They fancy there is nothing there!

This was yesterday afternoon. In the evening I stumbled upon an experience of a very different kind. I had promised to lecture at an anniversary

gathering in connection with a church in one of the poorer suburbs. I was not quite sure as to the distance, and I reached the building long before the appointed time. I was greeted at the church door by a singularly unattractive piece of humanity. He was a tall, gaunt, elderly man, somewhat bent at the shoulders, bearded and wrinkled. In spite of the balmy evening, he was muffled up in a great coat, which was obviously worn, not for comfort, but to conceal the clothes that it covered. He affected neither a collar nor a tie. There was something distinctly forbidding about him; he appeared gloomy and taciturn; his manner did not inspire confidence or encourage conversation. He shook my hand heartily but awkwardly; showed me the way to the vestry door; and seemed, I thought, relieved at dismissing me. Sitting alone in the vestry, it occurred to me that there must be more about this man than met the eye. He was not paid to come; his presence at that early hour proved that he discharged his duties cheerfully and faithfully. I felt as I had felt when leaning against the fence at the end of the road. The fence was forbidding; so was this man's manner. Was I to behave toward this man as the people in the motor car had behaved toward the end of the road? The valley beyond the fence had excited my curiosity; so did this man's character. I had conquered the fence and found the river, the willows, the swallows, and the kingfisher. Might I not be again standing,

all unconsciously, at the gates of paradise? Was I to turn away from this man, saying that there was nothing there? I felt ashamed of myself. It was the mote and the beam over again. What right had I to think hard thoughts of the people in the motor car? I was acting now just as they had done then! Once more I resolved to climb the fence and investigate. I strolled round to the front door and found my friend still at the top of the steps.

'I have never been here before,' I said, 'and as I shall be expected to refer presently to the work that you are doing here, I should like to be shown over the premises. Would you mind?'

I could see that I had touched him on a tender spot. There was very little to show me; but I could see that he was very fond and very proud of the place. I soon discovered, too, the main cause of his embarrassment when we first met.

'You must excuse me, sir,' he said, turning up the collar of his great coat, 'but, you see, I have to go on duty at eleven o'clock. I work all night in the tramway tunnels under the streets, seeing that things are all ready for the cars to run in the morning. There's no time to go home and change, so I have to wear my working clothes to the meeting. I was half a mind not to come; but there are only two or three of us to keep the place going; the others are late getting home to tea, and can't be here as soon as I can; and I didn't like to think that you might come and find no one here to receive you.'

I told him that I thought it was very noble of him to come at all under such conditions. I began to feel as I had felt in the afternoon, when the river and the willows first broke upon my view.

'Oh, don't say that, sir,' he pleaded, forgetting his earlier embarrassment and throwing off all reserve, 'don't say that! You see I was led to the Saviour here, over forty years ago. I wouldn't like to tell you what kind of a man I was in those days. But I tell you it made all the difference. And when I think of what my home has been these forty years, and what the church has been to me these forty years, I feel I can't keep away when there's something to be done!'

Half an hour later I was sitting next to the chairman, listening to the secretary's report. To my surprise, it contained an appreciative reference to my friend at the door. 'This church owes,' the secretary said, 'a debt that it can never repay, or even acknowledge, to Mr. Walter Price. Mr. Price is never absent from his place at the door on Sundays or week nights. Being on night duty, he spends his afternoons in visiting those who are sick or in trouble. He makes it his business to know every member of the congregation, and, but for his faithful and devoted service, steadfastly continued through so many years, it would have been impossible to maintain this work so long.'

Just as the meeting was closing, a piercing scream rang through the building, and a young fellow in an

epileptic fit was carried out. I was startled; but I noticed that nobody else was.

'It was young Price,' the chairman explained to me as soon as the meeting had closed. 'He is terribly afflicted; and the slightest excitement brings on one of his attacks. The people here are accustomed to it. It's a great trouble to his father. The poor old man has a heavy cross to carry.'

A heavy cross to carry! And I had blamed him for seeming gloomy and taciturn! I so nearly turned away, as did the people in the motor car, and said that there was nothing there!

As I passed through the schoolroom to the vestry to get my hat and coat, I saw the poor young sufferer reclining on a form, while another young fellow, evidently his brother, knelt beside him. In reply to my inquiries, the youth upon his knees assured me that his brother was almost himself again.

'I'm glad of that,' I said. 'I was talking to your father just now and feel very thankful to have met him.' He rose from his knees, his eyes sparkled, and his face glowed with enthusiasm.

'Then, sir,' he said, 'if you've been talking to my father, you've been talking to the best man living. My father's all gold, sir; that's what he is, all gold!'

Gold! Gold! All Gold! I felt as I had felt when the kingfisher suddenly settled on the wattle and added a new glory to the glen.

These twin experiences have given me my text for Sunday. There is One, the prophet says, Who,

at first seeming, is *'as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness: and, when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.'* But they who turn from Him on that account are like the people in the motor car. They make the mistake that I made when I saw gold and thought it granite. The people in the motor car never saw the graceful willows, never saw the gently flowing waters, never saw the sunlight glorify the lustrous plumage of the kingfisher. I very nearly missed a nugget of the purest gold. So easy is it to drive up to the gates of heaven and to turn away disappointed, thinking there is nothing there. There are fewer blind roads than we suppose. God's universe is divided into two hemispheres, the physical and the spiritual; they are both of them littered with gold and swarming with kingfishers.

III

OLD ETERNITY

I

Old Eternity was a mystery—a fascinating but inscrutable mystery. What was his real name? Where did he come from? How did he live? And why had he taken up his abode in this outlandish place? These were the questions that stared me in the face when I first met him on that remote New Zealand hillside; and they were still unanswered when I looked on his quaint misshapen form for the last time.

It is many a long year since I was in that wild romantic country. I am told that the Piripiki Gorge is now a popular holiday resort, with hotels, boarding-houses, and all the rest of it. Tourists throng to it from every town and city in the island. Steamers ply up and down the river daily with passengers and mails; and, from their decks, you see pleasure boats, containing parties of happy picnickers, darting in and out of all the coves and gullies down the gorge. I shudder to think of it. I am wicked, I know. It is by just such sacrileges and desecrations that humanity comes to its own. It is all a mark of progress. The world is getting on!

It is good that cities should spring up in the wilderness. But political economy is a poor balm for a sore heart. It brings me no comfort. When I revisit New Zealand, as I hope to do, nothing shall induce me to return to Piripiki Gorge. I could not bear it. For me its glory has forever departed.

When we first went there it was a vast, unbroken solitude. We had to arrange as best we could for the conveyance of our belongings and ourselves through that ten-mile gorge to the mouth of the river. And what a waterway it was! I have seen nothing on earth like it. Far as the eye can reach in every direction the mountainous peaks lift their massive heads to the blue, blue skies. The great green slopes sometimes feather gently and gradually down to the river's brink, and sometimes fall with abrupt and precipitous suddenness to the water's edge. As the boat moves round point after point, new reaches of river open out before you, and you wonder which is the grander, the scene that you have just left behind you or the one that now unfolds itself to your enraptured gaze. The boat glides on, and you catch glimpses of range beyond range, in bewildering number and variety, every slope densely draped in a glorious tangle of magnificent forestry, and every graceful form and outline perfectly mirrored in the crystalline waters below. We spent a month each year in exploring this panoramic paradise. The wild things along the banks stared at us in curiosity and astonishment as our boat stole

in and out among their leafy solitudes. We lived on what we shot; but in some of these fern-clad valleys the creatures were so tame that it seemed cruel to take advantage of their trustfulness. Why teach the pretty things to dread mankind? We christened each laughing creek and noisy island, and I was amused at discovering, in a guide-book recently sent me, that many of these beauty spots retain the names our children then conferred. Nowadays each of these bays has a jetty and a boat-house. In some of them there are sawmills and workmen's cottages. But in our time the virgin form of Nature stood as it had stood since creation's earliest morning. We often went for days without meeting any other representative of our own species. Just occasionally, however, the unexpected happened; or I should not now be writing about Old Eternity.

II

In the early part of the day we had rowed with a good tide about six miles up the gorge. We had landed, made a fire, cooked and eaten our lunch, and spent a pleasant afternoon in exploring the valley. By this time the tide had turned, and we decided to drift homeward on the current, pausing for tea at an inlet a few miles farther down. In pursuance of this programme we were gliding noiselessly through the gorge, admiring the infinite riot of vegetation, when, all at once, a huge rabbit, white as snow,

sprang on to a ledge of rock some distance up the slope, and, with his bright pink eyes, stared fixedly at us. Perhaps we ought to have spared him, but we knew that it would be dark by the time we reached camp. We knew, too, that the larder was empty. Let this excuse, as far as it may, the circumstance that, almost as soon as the splash of whiteness flecked the green, green hillside, the gorge shook and reverberated with the sound of a rifle. When the smoke cleared away there was still a suspicion of whiteness on the ledge, but it was limp and almost invisible. We pulled ashore; I jumped out and began to scramble up the bank. I had not gone more than fifty yards when, to my surprise, I came upon a track. Tossing the rabbit into the boat, I set out to investigate. I followed the track in its diagonal course athwart the slope, and, once over the ridge, came out on a patch of open country, partly under cultivation.

Among the trees in the distance I saw a thin, wavering column of smoke rising from a tiny wooden cabin. As I stood, surveying this garden in the wilderness, I heard the sound of footsteps approaching through the bush. Then, all at once, there emerged from the scrub the strangest piece of humanity that one need wish to see. He was so terribly bent that his back appeared to lie at right angles with his legs. When he confronted me, his neck seemed strained, as when an ordinary man looks up at the stars directly above him. There

was, however, nothing repulsive about him. His eyes were soft and kindly; his long, white beard emphasized the benevolence of his countenance, and his frame, though so dreadfully bent, gave a subtle impression of latent vigor and manly strength. His step was heavy and firm. He had evidently been startled by the noise of the gun, and had hurried round the field to ascertain the cause. He looked at me, I thought, a little resentfully, returned my greeting with a nod, and moved silently away as though setting off for his hut. Feeling that I had no right to force my presence upon him, my first impulse was to let him go and make my own way back to the boat. Fortunately, however, I resolved to give him another chance.

'I hope,' I said, 'I didn't startle you. I had no idea that anybody was living hereabouts.'

'Oh, no,' he said, 'it's a long time since I heard a gun so near. I came to see what it meant.' His speech was slow and thick, as of one who rarely spoke.

I told him of the rabbit, and begged him to accept it. He declined, however, assuring me that he had no difficulty in trapping all that he required. He caught sight of a box of matches peeping from my waistcoast pocket, and seemed delighted when I handed it to him. I asked if I might come back another day and bring more. He hesitated for a moment, and then gave the permission that I sought. In leaving him, I felt like an explorer who has made

a notable discovery. And so, indeed, I had. I had discovered Old Eternity.

III

This happened on the Wednesday. We passed White Rabbit Rock—as we called it—on the Thursday and the Friday. On each occasion I closely scrutinized the ridge, but could see no sign of my old friend. The thing seemed so fantastic and extraordinary that I even asked myself if it might not have been a dream. On the Saturday, however, I armed myself with a parcel containing a ball of string, a packet of matches, and a supply of fish-hooks, and again effected a landing. I found him this time in his cabin, but he was a different man! Every semblance of taciturnity and sullenness had left him. He was still shy and slow of speech, but genial, responsive, and apparently eager for friendship. In the hope that the confidence might be reciprocated, I told him about myself. But the fish did not rise to the bait. He seemed appreciative and interested; but he told me nothing! I glanced around for clues; but I found none. There were no photographs, no pictures, and only two books. One was a very well-worn Bible; the other, I afterward discovered, was a text-book on botany. From each volume the flyleaf, which had probably contained a name, had been torn out.

After we had chatted awhile he rose and reached

for his hat. I took the hint and prepared to depart, but he would not hear of it. He insisted on my accompanying him in a tour of his estate. And then came the revelation. The things that he pointed out, and the tales he told! I had fancied that he dwelt alone, but I found that he had millions of companions. He had made friends with all the trees and shrubs and plants and grasses that grew around the place. He knew their life-history, had watched them grow, and had gradually learned to love them. He handled the ferns and the mosses as though they were dear to him. One or two trees that were sickly or diseased he stroked so gently that you might have fancied that they were his children, and he told me of the treatment with which he was trying to heal and invigorate them. When we returned to the hut I noticed a number of bush pigeons in a tree near by. I expected them to fly as we approached, but they did nothing of the kind. He called them and seemed to expect them to answer him. In this, however, he was disappointed.

'They're not quite sure about you,' he said. 'Go behind a tree and watch!'

I did so, and, surely enough, in a minute or two, the birds came fluttering down to him. At one moment three of them were perched on his poor horizontal back, while one, greatly daring, settled on his outstretched wrist and ate freely from his open hand.

'Come in!' he said, after the birds had flown.

I looked at my watch. He simultaneously consulted his. I noticed the letters 'C.P.' inscribed on the well-worn case. It was the only hint I ever received as to his name.

'Why, dear me,' I exclaimed, 'it's past six. I had no idea it was so late. How quickly the time has flown!'

'It always does,' he answered, with a laugh that was almost musical. 'It always does. I have learned many things since I came to live in the hills. And, among others, I have learned that time never drags when you are busy, or when you are happy, or when you are perfectly at your ease.'

A far-away look came into his eyes, and he seemed to forget me and speak only to himself.

'Time never drags when you are busy, or when you are happy, or when you are perfectly at your ease,' he repeated in the course of his soliloquy. And then, turning to me, he exclaimed suddenly and with enthusiasm:

'Eternity won't seem long, you know; eternity won't seem long!'

I promised myself an hour's reflection on this suggestive outburst of his as I paddled back to the camp. I extended my hand to take farewell of him.

'But you haven't told me your name!' I said.

'No,' he replied, 'I have no name; at least, I have no need of a name up here!'

'Well,' I replied, 'if you don't tell me a name, I

shall have to give you one. I must have a name of some kind in my mind to associate with you!'

'And what would you call me?' he inquired.

'I think,' I said, remembering the observation which formed the climax of his philosophy, 'I think I should call you Old Eternity!'

'Capital!' he replied, his eyes sparkling. 'Call me Old Eternity! For eternity won't seem long, you know; eternity won't seem long!'

IV

Like the names that the children gave to the bays, creeks, and inlets, the name stuck to him. He must have told people about it; for, in the years that followed, I met several shepherds and squatters among the hills who spoke of the hermit as Old Eternity.

The rest of my story is soon told. It consists of three incidents that may or may not elucidate the mystery of my old friend's lonely life. I will set them down in order.

(*a*) The first was a visit from John Broadbanks, the minister at Silverstream. He drove over to Mosgiel one evening just after dusk, and evidently had something of moment on his mind.

'I say,' he began, 'you know the old fellow you've sometimes talked about, the hermit up among the Piripiki hills—"Old Eternity" you call him? I'm afraid he's dead! I heard about it when I was

visiting away down the Plain this afternoon. He was found dead in his cabin, and the doctor says that he must have passed away a day or two ago. The singular thing is that he had a horror of railways. They say that he lived up there because he said he could never bear to hear or see a railway engine again. Now, strangely enough, the new railway to the mines was opened on Tuesday. The scream of the engine can be distinctly heard at Piripiki; the doctor thinks he died of heart failure; and the people down the Plain are saying that it was the railway that killed him. Strange, isn't it?'

(*b*) The following summer, in poking about the bush, I came upon a little God's-acre among the hills, in which there were four graves. Three of them were nameless; perhaps the monuments—such as they were—had been destroyed. But the fourth was comparatively new. At the head there stood a simple wooden cross; and, on the cross, roughly written, this inscription:

Here lies
OLD ETERNITY
(C. P.)

He lived here many years, and died suddenly on September 17, 1899.

I stood there bareheaded for a moment. The bell-birds and the tuis were calling from the giant trees around, and, perhaps whimsically, I wondered

whether, among the pigeons that flitted hither and thither among the branches, there were any of the birds that had feasted from the old man's hand.

(*c*) About three years afterward, I noticed the following advertisement in one of the morning papers:

ANY PERSON possessing information as to the whereabout of Professor COURTNEY PENNINGTON, who lost his wife and children, and was himself badly injured in the great railway disaster at Taddington Junction, on March 3, 1871, *is respectfully requested to communicate with Messrs. HEATH AND HAMPTON, Solicitors,* 37 *Great Compton Street, Liverpool. Professor PENNINGTON is believed to have left England shortly after his recovery from his injuries and has never since been heard of.*

I forwarded to Messrs. Heath and Hampton the particulars that I have here set down, but I understand that, in a legal sense, the identity of my old friend among the hills was never conclusively established. But what does it matter? The exercise of writing has brought his face once more vividly to mind. I see his eye light up with enthusiasm as he lovingly handles the mosses and the ferns; I watch once more the pleasure that he feels in the confidence of the wild birds, and I hear again his chuckle as I present him with a name.

'Time never drags when you are busy,' he says, 'or when you are happy, or when you are perfectly

at your ease. Eternity won't seem long, you know; eternity won't seem long!'

And again, with those words ringing in my ears and in my heart, I take my leave of him.

IV

SIMON POTTINGER

I

Little Mr. Pottinger was very, very old. He may not have been as ancient as, to our childish fancy, he seemed; but I remember that we were half afraid of him. He used to totter down on a summer's evening, bent nearly double, and leaning heavily upon a pair of sticks. In a great arm chair that we kept on purpose he would sit just beside the steps at the back door, smoking his pipe in the evening sunlight. It was a long, long pipe; we never saw anybody else with one like it. In the intervals of indulgence he would lay it on the step beside him, and once I nearly trod on it. The horror of it comes back upon me as I write; I dreamed all that night that the pipe, in the form of a hideous serpent, was pursuing me incessantly. When the pipe was resting on the steps, Mr. Pottinger would talk to us, when we could summon up courage to cluster round him, of the things he could remember. Some of these things were a long way back in our history books; and, after hearing the old gentleman speak of them, we would scamper away and discuss the

situation among ourselves. He had once heard William Pitt deliver an address on the Napoleonic peril; his brother had fought under the great Duke at Waterloo, and he himself could tell of the coming of the first railway trains.

We would sometimes sit and look at him and wonder how old he really was. I can see him now as he lifted his glass to his lips, his palsied hand shaking so violently that it was a wonder to us that any of the beverage reached its destination. We thought that he must have lived for centuries and centuries. With a child's awe of everything pertaining to the dread mystery of death, some of us formulated the theory that poor little Mr. Pittinger had forgotten how to die, and would have to totter about the world for ever. Just once I was left all alone with him. He had been telling us some stories of his own boyhood; I had been particularly interested; my brothers had slipped away one by one, and I alone was left at his feet. He reached out his trembling hand, seized the long pipe, and, greatly daring, I assisted him to light it. He puffed away for a moment in silence, and I thought that the reminiscent mood had forsaken him. I was preparing to follow my brothers when, to my astonishment, he stretched forth his palsied hand and laid it on my head. Then, looking me full in the face, he said: *'My boy, if you live to be as old as I am, you will learn that there are only two sets of things in life. There are the things that change; and they*

are very wonderful. And there are the things that never change; and they are more wonderful still!'

Little Mr. Pottinger went the way of all flesh after all. I remember how we stared at each other in silent amazement when we heard that he was dead. But I have carried his words in my heart ever since, and they rush back upon my mind to-day.

The Wonderful Things that Change!

The Still More Wonderful Things that Never Change at all!

II

'Why does that small hand go round and round?' asked a blue-eyed, curly headed little fellow as he sat upon my knee and pointed to the watch that I held in my hand.

An hour later we stood together by the watermill. We watched the silvery stream as, issuing from the distant woods, it wound its serpentine way between its banks of bluebells and plunged with a laugh over the moss-covered millwheel.

'Why does the wheel go round and round?' he asked again.

A child cannot conceive of meaningless movement. If he sees a thing in motion he instantly assumes that there is a reason for it, and he straightway asks his everlasting *Why?* And he is right, He is acting in obedience to a sure and profound instinct. He feels vaguely at the dawn of life what

old Mr. Pottinger sees clearly in the dusk of life—that there is a charm in the things that change. They do not change for the sake of changing. I have seen a very nervous man rise from his chair, move about the room, sit down again, and once more change his seat without the slightest shadow of reason. He simply could not sit still. We are not living in a neurasthenic universe. Things do not twist and twitch and twirl convulsively. My blue-eyed little companion looked at the watch, and, later on, looked at the water-mill. He felt that he had been born into a world of wheels. They were spinning and revolving about him on every hand. Everything was moving, turning, changing. As in the case of the watch and the water-mill, he could seldom see the motive behind the movement. The wheels appear to go round and round without achieving anything. The world seems none the better for their turning. The mechanism is out of sight; the works are hidden; the purpose is carefully concealed. And yet, out of that fair faith that always dwells in fresh young souls like his, my little companion felt that the wheels were not wild wheels. He did not know why the hand of the watch went round; but he felt in the depths of his heart that there was a reason; and he asked his boyish Why? He could see no sense in the turning of the mill-wheel; but it seemed incredible to him that it served no purpose by turning; so once again he asked the reason why. He felt intuitively what Mr. Pottinger

learned experimentally; there is something very wonderful about the things that change.

III

Morning: Afternoon: Evening: Night! Morning: Afternoon: Evening: Night! See how the wheels go round!

Spring: Summer: Autumn: Winter! Spring: Summer: Autumn: Winter! See how the wheels go round!

And they seem such purposeless wheels! The day comes back to the morning and the year comes back to the spring. The wheel completes its circuit; comes back to its starting point; and then goes round again. The ceaseless revolutions—Morning, afternoon, evening, night! spring, summer, autumn, winter!—seem to accomplish nothing. Crops spring up and are mown down; forests rise and forests fall; empires appear and empires vanish; generations come and go. The same thing happens over and over again. The wheels go round and round and round. But what is gained by their turning? Like the little fellow pointing first to the watch and then to the water-mill, I find myself asking Why? Has Nature any purpose in all this whirling of wheels?

She has! Just as, in watch and watermill, there are works hidden from the child's blue eyes and incomprehensible to his young brain, so behind these constantly revolving wheels, great ends are being

served and great purposes achieved. Nature is at work. She is doing something. Morning, afternoon, evening, night! Spring, summer, autumn, winter! Every revolution of the wheels brings her nearer to her goal. She is grinding out the weak and worthless things that lie about the world and is strengthening her wondrous web at every turn. When I was a very small boy my grandmother presented me with a finely illustrated copy of Figuier's *The World Before the Deluge.* In her fond fancy she evidently saw in me a future President of the Royal Society; and I have sometimes felt thankful that she did not live to taste the bitterness of disillusionment. But many an hour did I spent feasting my eyes on those wonderful pictures. What a world it must have been when these hideous monsters had the planet pretty much to themselves! I used to stare, almost in terror, at the dinosaur and the diplodocus, the icthysosaurus and the plesiosaurus, the iguanodon and the megalosaurus, the labyrinthodon and the brontosaurus until, falling asleep over the volume, their monstrous and ungainly forms would break upon me in my dreams. I fancied that I saw these frightful apparitions—creatures of thick hide and slow movement—dragging their sluggish lengths about the hills and valleys with which I was so familiar. And, as knowledge came and wisdom, it pleased me to think that Nature had improved upon these prentice efforts of hers. These heavy and ponderous mammoths have

gone out of our natural history as men in coats of mail have gone out of our military history, and for much the same reason. Brute force yielded to brain force. There arose the smaller orders. They were creatures of supple sinew and lithe movement, creatures of sharp eyes and sensitive ears, creatures of quick wit and agile limbs. They had the cunning to band themselves together in herds, troops, and packs. Outmatched at every point, the ponderous monsters of the primitive period vanished from the face of the earth. The giants were destroyed by the pigmies. The wheels were going round. Morning, afternoon, evening, night! Spring, summer, autumn, winter! Cycle followed cycle; and revolution followed revolution. But Nature was improving herself and making progress all the time. Behind the visible wheels were the invisible works!

The generations come and go. The wheels go round. Childhood grows to youth, youth to maturity, maturity to old age; and age is surrounded by childhood again. But we must not be tricked by appearances. The baby born this morning is a little older than any baby ever born before. His childish appearance and infantile behavior are mere subterfuge and camouflage, the kind of thing in which many people indulge who would have us believe that they are younger than they really are. In point of fact, by the time a man reaches babyhood he has about twenty centuries to his credit. There is such a thing as race-memory. The cunning

of animals is the result of the accumulated experience of countless generations. Creatures that are hunted generation after generation inherit a legacy of caution and are born sly. 'There is no doubt,' said Darwin, 'that birds and other animals both acquire and lose caution in relation to man or other enemies; and this caution is certainly an inherited habit or instinct,' and he quotes Leroy, an excellent observer, as stating that in districts in which foxes are much hunted the young, on first leaving their burrows, are incontestably much more wary than even the old ones in districts where they are not much disturbed. If this be true of the beasts, to what a heritage has man succeeded! To a superficial observer the history of humanity appears to be a mere turning of the wheels. Such an onlooker sees it as the child sees the watch and the watermill. But, in revolving, the wheels are working all the time. Each generation carries the race a little nearer to its destiny; like Nature herself, each generation does something toward the elimination of the ancient evil; each contributes something toward the final victory of the good. Each generation brings the kingdom of God a little nearer to the hearts of men. The wheels go round and round; but they do not spin in vain.

The wheels revolve in my own life. We each make our way from our first childhood to our second childhood, and, in the simplicities of old age, the wheel seems to have returned to its starting-

point. But, as with the watch and the watermill, there are works behind the wheel. Something is being achieved; something is being made. With the turning of the wheels a character is being formed, a soul is being fashioned. Somebody has said that no man can cross a river twice. When he comes to it the second time the river is not the same river and the man is not the same man. The waters that he crossed before have been swept into the sea; the man himself has changed in thought, in feeling, and even in physical tissue. The wheels are at work. We are not to-day what we were yesterday. For weal or for woe, we are in the making. In his *Priest of the Ideal* Stephen Graham makes one of his characters rebuke another because of his failure to recognize the instrinsic splendor of life. 'Why, man,' he exclaims, 'your opportunities are boundless! Your whole life should be a miracle! Instead of merely making a *living,* you can *live!* Instead of finding a *calling,* you can listen for *the call!* You *are;* but you have also *to become!* A wonderful world about you is beckoning you, enticing you *to become!*' To become! That is the secret of the wheels! I am only in the making as yet; the wheels go round and round in order to complete the work. As in the case of Nature, and as in the history of the race, it is the work of the wheels to grind out the evil and bring forth the good. The wheels are working, working, working all the time!

So true is it, as little Mr. Pottinger told me, that

there are things that are always changing, and those things are very wonderful!

IV

But little Mr. Pottinger went farther. *'My boy,'* he said, as he laid his trembling hand upon my head that day, *'if you live to be as old as I am, you will learn that there are only two sets of things in life. There are the things that change; and they are very wonderful. And there are the things that never change; and they are more wonderful still!'* How well I remember the day on which the little old gentleman was buried! Father went out after dinner dressed in deepest black. What had happened to little Mr. Pottinger we could but vaguely imagine; and our hearts stood still within us when we tried to fancy what they were going to do with him. 'Father had gone to the funeral,' that was all the information mother would give us. We went off to the nursery and played at funerals all the afternoon; and, as none of us had ever seen a funeral, there was ample scope for the exercise of our childish imaginations. At tea-time—father having returned—we asked a hundred questions, but the replies were strictly economical. The only satisfaction was that father promised that, some Sunday afternoon, he would take us to see Mr. Pottinger's grave and would tell us all about it. He did. By that time a neat new tombstone adorned the spot. I can see it

now. It contained Mr. Pottinger's name, a few personal particulars of no interest to us, and then the words:

'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

The things that never change, the little old gentleman had said, are the most wonderful of all! But is there stagnation in the infinite? While all terrestrial things make progress with the whirlings of the wheels, do celestial things stand still? It is not an agreeable reflection. And yet—! Finite things change because they are moving toward perfection; the infinite is changeless because it is already there!

'Is it not perfect?' asked my friend, as he drew my attention to the geranium in his buttonhole. I agreed. The beautiful bloom presented no qualities that tended to disfigure it; and, on the other hand, it lacked nothing that the most fastidious horticulturalist could have desired. Similarly, Professor Romanes says that the most extraordinary thing about Jesus is the fact that twenty centuries have failed to find a single flaw in Him; and, on the other hand, Dr. Young says that the most amazing thing about Him is the fact that twenty centuries have failed to suggest any respect in which the central figure of the Gospels can be improved. There He stands—absolutely perfect and therefore absolutely changeless. To change perfection is to shatter it.

The same to-day as yesterday! What He was, He is! The Christ of Galilee still walks our dusty

ways. His companionship is the most sublime reality of the hour that has just struck.

The same for ever as to-day! Come what come may, in this world or in any other, He will be there, always the same and always in control!

An Oriental legend says that, in his early days, Abraham worshiped the stars, but when he needed them most they were invisible! Then he made the sun his God, but when he sought his deity in the hour of his distress it was obscured! He turned to the moon; but when his soul was most desolate, the moon was not to be seen! Then, when he heard the call that sent him forth on pilgrimage, he bowed in the twilight, and cried, 'I give myself to Him who was and is and is to come, Father of stars and moon and sun, who never sets because He is Himself the Eternal Noon!' *'There are only two sorts of things,'* said little Mr. Pottinger. *'There are the things that change; and they are very wonderful. And there are the things that never change; and they are more wonderful still!'*

V

SECOND THOUGHTS

The man who can keep ahead of his second thoughts is sure of the kingdom of God. But it is almost impossible to do it. Second thoughts are fleet of foot, and if I pause but for an instant they are upon me. The ancients were haunted by a horror of the Furies. The dreaded sisters were tall of stature; of grim and frightful aspect; each was wrapped in a black and bloody robe; serpents twined in her hair, and blood trickled from her flaming eyes. Each held a burning torch in one hand and a whip of scorpions in the other. With swift, noiseless and unrelenting footsteps they pursued their wretched victims. No distance could tire them; no obstacles could baffle them; no tears could move them; no sacrifices could appease them. What, I wonder, was the origin of this weird myth? What was the substance that cast this hideous shadow? What were the Furies? Each of the philosophers has a theory of his own; and so have I! Basing my hypothesis upon the firm foundation of my own experience, I have no hesitation in affirming that the Furies which the ancients dreaded were their second thoughts. In many ways, indeed, my second thoughts are far more terrible than the Furies. The

Furies tracked down the unhappy object of their cruel malice and slew him; *that* was bad enough. But my second thoughts hunt me down with resolute and dogged persistence, and, leaving me unhurt, they snatch my children from my arms and dash them to pieces before my very eyes; *that* is very much worse. As soon as my children are born to me —the children of my noblest impulses, the children of my happiest moods, the children of my better self—my second thoughts give me no rest until they have completed their dread work of destruction. I have been able, happily, to save a few; but they cannot console me for the lovely creatures I have lost. My fairest flowers have all been shattered; my dearest children are all dead!

In all this I am not alone. Others, to my certain knowledge, have suffered in the same way. The New Testament has a great story of four travelers who, one by one, made their way down the Bloody Pass—the short cut from Jerusalem to Jericho. Of the four I find the third—the Levite—by far the most interesting, at any rate, just now. I have never been able to find in my heart much sympathy for the first. He knew perfectly well the sinister reputation held by that gloomy pass; he knew that the darksome forests on either side of the way were infested by brigands; yet he deliberately took all the risks. He was not the first man in the history of the world, and he was certainly not the last, who plunged along a path that he knew to be perilous,

and then blamed the church for not helping him when the thieves had done their worst. I am not excusing the priest; he must answer for himself. But I certainly think that the first of these four travelers has something to explain.

At this moment, however, it is the third for whom I have most sympathy. I see him journeying along the pass; I see him start as he hears a moan from the unfortunate traveler lying on the other side of the way; I see him turn aside and cross the road to the sufferer's relief; and then I see him pause! That pause spoiled everything! The instant that he paused the Furies were upon him! His second thoughts pounced upon their prey. When he heard the moan, and turned aside, he really meant to help the man. A generous purpose had been born within his breast. His second thoughts, knowing of its birth, vowed that the noble resolution should be slain. His second thoughts watched their chance; he hesitated half-way across the road; his second thoughts instantly tore the kindly impulse from his grasp; with merciless hands they killed it on the spot.

Now, no man can look on both sides of the road at the same time. If that fourth traveler—the Good Samaritan—had been able to do so, he would have seen not *one* Victim, but *two,* in the Bloody Pass. As he came down the road, he too, heard a smothered moan. Instantly he stopped his mule, glanced in the direction from which the sound proceeded,

and saw the wounded man. The thieves, we are told, had left him half-dead. That is the difference between the thieves and the Furies. Second thoughts never do anything by halves. They utterly destroy *their* victim. He will never moan again. The beneficent impulse that his second thoughts tore from the Levite's breast lay stiff and stark in the stillness of death by the roadside. The Good Samaritan helped the *half-dead* victim of the brigands from the ditch on the one side of the pass; and he was so absorbed in his merciful ministry that he did not notice the *quite-dead* victim of second thoughts lying in the ditch on the other. It does not matter much; the poor murdered thing was beyond all human help; yet it would have elicited a certain amount of sympathy for the bereaved Levite if the Samaritan had noticed the body and reported it. His attention was, however, fully occupied; he failed to discover the traces of the second tragedy; and, although somewhat late in the day, I am writing these lines to repair, as far as possible, his omission.

And, while I think of it, it is my duty to point out that the failure of the Samaritan to observe the mutilated body of the Levite's generous purpose raises a particularly interesting and important question. Is a man to be judged by his first thoughts or his second thoughts? Is the Levite who turned aside to help, and then changed his mind, any better than the priest who never swerved from his

course at all? A broken-hearted father loves to think, as he lowers into the grave the little casket that holds all that is mortal of his tiny babe, that, in spite of death's apparent victory, the child is still his. The little one died almost as soon as it was born; but he somehow feels that, for ever and for ever, it belongs to him, and that he is a richer man for its coming. Now the question is: Am I entitled to cherish the same sentiment in relation to those noble purposes and generous impulses that my second thoughts tore from my breast almost as soon as they were born? Am I not entitled to some credit for the handsome things that, on first thoughts, I *meant* to do, even though, on second thoughts, I never *did* them? I cannot say. The problem is too deep for me. While we stand here, however, baffled by this uncertainty on the major issue, let us gather up such minor certainties as we can find. If we cannot secure for ourselves the loaf that we covet, we need not refuse to eat such crumbs as are lying about at our feet. And this much, at least, is clear. Most of us are a great deal better than we seem. I happen to know the Levite and the Good Samaritan very well. I do not know what they were doing in the neighborhood of Jericho, for nowadays they both live in our suburb. I have always been polite to the Levite, but there has been no love lost between us. Our relationship has been characterized by a distinct aloofness. But I feel to-day that I owe him an apology. I have been doing him a grave

injustice. I have never given him the slightest credit for that high resolve that was so quickly murdered by his second thoughts. Even though his pity came to nothing, I like to think that the man whom I have treated so coldly is capable of pity. Even though his resolve perished as soon as it was born, I like to think that this apathetic neighbor of mine once said to himself, 'I will turn aside and rescue this poor fellow.' I have treated him distantly, and passed him with the merest nod, and, all the while, he and I are brothers. We are brothers in affliction. For his trouble is my trouble, his grief my grief. Have I not already said that, over and over again, my second thoughts have snatched my noblest purposes, my worthiest projects, from my breast and murdered them under my very eyes? The selfsame calamity has overtaken him, and I have shown him no sympathy! And all the while he has been watching me. He has seen no lofty design fulfilled by me, and he has taken it for granted that I never cherished one. He does not know what I have suffered at the hands of second thoughts. If I meet the Levite on my way home this evening, I shall show him a cordiality that has never before marked our intercourse with one another. Having been robbed of my own spiritual children by the worst of all the Furies, I must extend a helping hand to an unfortunate comrade who has been put to grief in the same way.

The Good Samaritan, too, I meet very frequently.

I saw him helping a lady with her parcels only this afternoon. I see now that to him also I have been unjust. Not that I have failed to recognize his worth. Ever since he turned aside that night in the Bloody Pass, and rescued the wounded man whose chance of life was so rapidly vanishing, I have given him a conspicuous place in my gallery of heroes. He is to me a knight of the most golden order of chivalry. And yet, for all that, I have never done him justice. I have always thought very highly of him, but not so highly as he deserves. I have admired his readiness to relieve the distressed, to succor the fallen, and to befriend all who need a helping hand. But I never realized till to-day that he only does all this after a desperate struggle. I have taken it for granted that he enjoys a complete immunity from the attacks of second thoughts. But I see now that I have been mistaken. When he paused in the lane, as the Levite paused before him, a gang of second thoughts sprang upon him, and attempted to strangle the kindly thought which had been born within him. But he fought for his purpose so bravely, so tenaciously, and so successfully, that the second thoughts were scattered, the generous purpose preserved, and the heroic deed actually accomplished. When I meet the Good Samaritan in our suburban streets, I shall raise my hat to him more reverently than ever. I always thought that he was good; I see now that he is even better than he seemed.

Second thoughts were designed to be the peers of the intellectual realm. They constitute a House of Lords, a chamber of review. It was intended that they should be a check upon any hasty and injudicious legislation that my first thoughts might introduce. And, to do them justice, they often serve me excellently in that very way. My first thoughts are often moved by sentiment, by caprice, by anger, or by some gust of passion; and it is a happy circumstance for me that the project has to run the gauntlet of the Upper House. My second thoughts make short work of such rash and ill-considered devices. Many a rash scheme, unanimously and enthusiastically approved by my first thoughts, has been contemptuously rejected in the chamber of review. But, unfortunately, that higher chamber has, in a marked degree, the weakness of all such legislative institutions. It is too cautious. It tends to conservatism. It is not sufficiently progressive. It fails to distinguish between a gust of vapid emotion and a wave of magnanimous determination. And so it comes to pass that it scornfully rejects some of the most splendid enactments that my first thoughts produce. The question of the abolition of the Upper House is always a knotty one. It is particularly so in this connection. Would I, if I could, abolish the chamber of my second thoughts? It is very difficult to say. When I recall the wild and senseless projects from which they have saved me, I shudder at the thought of removing from my life so substantial a safe-

guard. Yet when I remember how often they have stood between me and moral grandeur, I feel resigned to their destruction. The finer feelings invariably express themselves through the medium of first thoughts; it is the more sordid and selfish sides of my nature that reveal themselves when the second thoughts arrive. In reality, the lightning and the thunder occur simultaneously. But the flash of the one is seen immediately, while the rumble of the other is only heard after an appreciable interval. Conscience expresses itself like the lightning, instantaneously; the mutterings of reason and self-interest, like the thunder, come lumbering along later. It has been said that the men who, in the great war-days, won the Victoria Cross, won it by yielding to the impulses of the moment. Thousands of others were similarly situated, and felt that same sudden and sublime inspiration. But, unfortunately, they hesitated. During that momentary spasm of uncertainty a multitude of second thoughts surged in upon their minds; those second thoughts were, without exception, thoughts of caution, of safety, and of self-interest; and, as a result, the splendid deed was never done and the coveted distinction never won. I really believe that the heroic, the chivalrous, the sacrificial would become commonplace but for the excessive caution of that Upper House.

If ever I become a king, or a dictator, or a president, or anything of that kind, I shall establish a special Order of Merit, to be conferred upon men

and women who contrive to conquer their second thoughts whenever their second thoughts threaten the realization of their best selves. The badge of the Order will consist of a representation of the Good Samaritan. And its membership will include some very knightly spirits. I shall confer the ribbon of my Order on men of the stamp of William Law. William Law—who afterward wrote a book that changed the face of the world—was once a poor young tutor in the household of the Gibbons of Putney—the household that afterward gave to the world its greatest historian. In those days Mr. Law used to think a great deal about the widows and orphans whom he had known so well, and helped so often, at his old home at King's Cliffe. 'If,' he used to say to his new friends at Putney, 'if only I were a rich man, those poor women and children should never again have need to beg for bread!' But it was no good saying *'if.'* He was *not* rich; he was scarcely less poor than the people he pitied. One day, however, he had occasion to visit the city. Standing in the doorway of a bookshop in Paternoster Row, looking at the passing crowd, a strange experience befell him. 'A young man, in the dress and with the manners of a gentleman's servant, stepped out of the crowd and asked him if he was Mr. Law. On receiving an affirmative reply, he put a letter into his hand. When Law opened the letter, he found inside it a bank-note for a thousand pounds. No name accompanied the note, and, by

the time that Law looked up from the letter, the messenger had vanished. Before Law stepped from that doorway he made his resolution. He took the first coach to King's Cliffe, and, before he returned to Putney, had made arrangements for the erection and endowment of a residential school for fourteen poor girls.' William Law knew that the whole pack of second thoughts were on his track. He determined at any cost to keep ahead of them; and he succeeded so well that upon him I shall certainly confer the ribbon of my Order.

It will be said, I know, that I am too severe. I am indulging, I shall be told, not in a criticism, but in a diatribe. In my fierce reprobation of second thoughts I have almost stooped to invective. I know; I know! But let it be remembered, in extenuation of my offense, that I am a minister of the everlasting gospel. And no man is so harassed and cheated and victimized by second thoughts as a minister of the gospel. Every Sunday of my life I preach a story that might move a statue to tears. It is the story of the Cross; the story of redeeming love; the greatest, sublimest love-story ever told. And I can see, as I watch the play of emotion on the faces of my hearers, that I have swayed their reasons, touched their consciences, and almost won their hearts. But it all comes to nothing. They pause for just a moment, as the Levite paused in the middle of the road. Their hearts are almost won—almost, almost, *almost!* But, while they hesitate,

the second thoughts come surging in. I see them—millions of them—swarming into the building while the congregation is singing the closing hymn. They get to work without a second's delay. The heavenly aspiration that I marked upon the people's faces is stifled at its birth. The doors open and the crowd melts away. I have been robbed by second thoughts of the fruit of all my labors. If the people had only acted as the Good Samaritan acted, as the hero of the battlefield acted, and as William Law acted, they would have flocked to the Cross like doves to their windows. The man, I say again, who can keep ahead of his second thoughts is sure of the kingdom of God.

VI

THE HOME OF THE ECHOES

'HAVE you been to the Home of the Echoes!' John Broadbanks inquired, as, taking off his coat, he stepped into the boat in which I was already seated. We were spending a holiday together in that medley of deep blue lakes and snow-capped mountains that makes the interior of New Zealand such a perfect wonderland. Each of us had visited the district separately; and now that we were here together, we found endless pleasure in directing one another to beauty spots that only one of the twain had previously contrived to discover.

'Well then,' he continued, on receiving the negative reply for which he had hoped, 'we'll go there this morning. We have to cross the lake and creep along an inlet that winds among the cliffs at the base of the mountains. I think it will interest you!'

An hour later we were shut in by sheer precipices on either side. Then, all at once, the boat shot round a towering bluff that, had it been dusk, might have been mistaken for the crumbling ruins of some old baronial castle; and we found ourselves in a tranquil bay hemmed in by the great green hills over the tops of which the snow-clad heights were peep-

ing. In one glorious tangle of fern and forestry, the bush came feathering down to the water's edge. Look which way we would, there was no sign of civilization; the nearest mortal was miles and miles away. A weasel stared at us from behind a clump of pampasgrass; a black rabbit looked down in surprise from a projecting shelf of rock about halfway up the slope; a cluster of tuis discussed the situation excited in their observatory among the tree-tops; and away up the valley, we could hear the music of a waterfall. The nut-brown weasel at the water's edge and the black rabbit up the bank both vanished as we stepped ashore. John led me round the sweep of crescent beach, and then along a narrow shelf of rock to a rugged and moss-covered peninsula that jutted far out into the stream, and was the haunt of a solemn old cormorant who, on our arrival, spread his wings and flew across the bay.

'Now,' John said, 'call out anything you like, and you'll hear it shouted from hill-top to hill-top half a dozen times after you!'

'John!' I cried, at the top of my voice; and in a few seconds there was an insistent demand for John from every point of the compass. A sentence of from six to ten syllables, sharply and clearly enunciated, came back to us without a flaw.

'I suppose,' John observed, as we sat beside the pampas-grass, enjoying our lunch, a few minutes later, 'I suppose that your people at Mosgiel will be

getting a sermon one of these days on the Valley of Anathoth—the Valley of Echoes!'

If such a sermon was ever preached, it was preached by John to his people at Silverstream. No such discourse, I blush to confess, was ever addressed to my Mosgiel congregation. I have often marvelled since that I was so slow to act upon John's valuable suggestion. I can see now that the secluded bay to which he took me was more full of echoes than I noticed at the time. I see now that the whole wide world is a Valley of Anathoth, the whole wide world is a Nest of Echoes.

What about the nut-brown weasel whose sharp little eyes stared so fixedly at us from behind the shelter of the pampas? What about the black rabbit sitting on his haunches away up the ledge? What about the white-throated tuis in the branches of the lofty blue gums? Why is it that to-day, with twenty long years lying between me and the Home of the Echoes, the weasel and the rabbit and the tuis stand out as clearly before my mind as if the incident had occurred but yesterday? The valley and the bay are but a haze of emerald and silver. There were thousands of things there bigger than the weasel, the rabbit, and the birds. There were thousands of things more noteworthy. The weasel, the rabbit, and the birds were fleeting things. They had not lived long; they have perished years ago. Many of the giant trees had stood there for generations, and are standing there still. Yet I have for-

gotten the trees and the rocks and the outline of the everlasting hills; I have remembered only the weasel and the rabbit and the tuis! Why?

It is all a matter of echoes. Life is a very companionable affair; it aches for response. As deep calls to deep, and height answers to height, so life loves to greet life and to be saluted by it. No matter how charming or idyllic a scene may be, it is never quite complete unless, somewhere within its sweep, a living, breathing, sentient creature takes its place. A painting of the rugged highlands appears unfinished unless, somewhere among the heather, we catch a glimpse of shaggy cattle; in an English woodland landscape we like to get a hint of the stag among the trees; a view of the ocean would seem strangely defective but for the soaring albatross or wheeling gulls; and, even in a picture of the solitary crags, the eye rests with contentment on the eagle poised on outspread wings above the dizziest peak. We must have life. Mr. H. G. Wells, in one of the most daring of his imaginative flights, has described the landing of his heroes on the surface of the moon. Now we often fail to recognize the indispensability of a thing until we are temporarily deprived of it. These men—the first men on the moon—have no idea that the response of life to life is so vivid and essential an element in human experience until they find themselves in a world that is absolutely lifeless. The sense of being the only living creatures on the desolate orb that they have invaded freezes their

blood and almost paralyzes their powers. They have reached a world that is blasted, burnt up, played out, exhausted, destitute, and cold! It is a dry, dead, withered world; the most dreary and dismal of all the worlds; a world in which nothing scampers or sings, flutters or flies. It is a weird and monstrous wilderness—arid, grey, silent, and monotonous; everything is sullen, sinister, sardonic, and grim. There is no response of any kind to the beating, pulsing, quivering life within them. The absence of that response appals and startles them. This is, to all intents and purposes, a picture of the silver bay and the wooded glen without the weasel, the rabbit, and the tuis.

From this cheerless picture, painted for us by Mr. H. G. Wells, we turn with relief to a brighter one from the brush of Mr. Stewart White. Mr. White is a born bushman and a born naturalist. Not all the diamonds of Golconda would tempt Mr. White to succeed the Man in the Moon. He loves life, and would go mad in a dead world. In his books he describes the delight of the bushman in finding himself in the presence of live things. He develops, Mr. White tells us, a kind of sixth sense by means of which, even when he cannot hear or see the creatures near him, he becomes conscious, in some mysterious fashion, of their presence. 'On the other side of the screen of broad leaves,' he says, 'we sensed the presence of life. It did not intrude upon us, nor were we permitted to intrude on it.

But it was there! We felt it in some subtle way, as one knows of a presence in a darkened room. By the exercise of imagination we identified it in its manifestations—the squirrel, the partridge, the spruce hens, once or twice the deer. We knew it saw us perfectly, although we could not see it; it gave us an impression of companionship; the forest was never lonely.' Now here, in contrast with the moon, is a world full of echoes, full of vibrations, full of responses. I am surrounded on every hand by life in many phases and in many forms. It may be beautiful or terrible, repulsive or charming, it does not matter. Wherever there is life, it will respond to the life within myself; the life within myself will, in turn, respond to it; and I shall feel a certain delightful exhilaration and sensuous enrichment in having met and greeted it. That is why I have forgotten the trees and the ferns and the boulders, yet have remembered so vividly the tuis and the weasel and the rabbit. 'The Home of the Echoes'—so John Broadbanks named the charming spot to which he took me. He named it well. There are more echoes there than he supposed.

Now, strangely enough, this responsiveness of life to life gives rise to two very different instincts —the instinct of the naturalist and the instinct of the sportsman. We must follow them both as far as they will take us. Of the two, the instinct of the sportsman is, for the time being, the most absorbing and exciting; there is a flush of triumph in out-

witting the cunning of the wild and in bringing home the game. Jack London says that the blood-lust, the joy to kill, seizes men and beasts at life's very summit. It is an ecstasy that comes to us when the hot blood is surging vigorously in our veins, when the sinews are tingling with strength, when the nerves are like steel, and when the entire being is throbbing with the sheer gladness of being alive. The life within responds to the life without and challenges it. There ensues a battle of wits, a contest of endurance, and then—death! And death, when it so suddenly and tragically stares the sportsman in the face, only emphasizes the soundness of our philosophy of echoes. For what is this limp and blood-stained mass that lies at his feet? What has become of the bounding, flashing, quivering thing that, half an hour ago, he so excitedly pursued? Certainly *this* is not *that!* What is it that we miss when we are confronted by dead things? Here is Catherine Furze looking at the carcass of poor Maggie, the horse of which she had been so fond. 'She thought of the brave animal which she had so often seen, apparently for the mere love of difficulty, struggling as if its sinews would crack. She thought of its glad recognition when she came into the stable, and of its evident affection, half human, or perhaps wholly human, and imprisoned in a form which did not permit of full expression. She looked at its body as it lay there extended, quiet, pleading, as it were, against the doom of man and beast, and

tears came to her eyes.' Why? Mark Rutherford has already told us why. It is the contrast between the welcome that the horse always extended to her when she visited the stable and its present stony indifference. It is the absence of response. And so we learn our lesson by contraries. We look upon the dead pony, the dead dog, the dead canary—or something even dearer still—and, by marking bitterly the utter irresponsiveness of death, we catch a glimpse, from another standpoint, of the rich responsiveness of life.

Has not Turgenieff, the Russian novelist, told us of his first and last taste of the sportsman's triumph? 'When I was only ten years old,' he says, 'my father took me out for a day's shooting. As we tramped together across the brown stubble, a golden pheasant rose with a whirr from the ground at my feet. Flushed with the excitement that sportsmen know so well, I raised my gun and fired. The smoke cleared away, and, to my unbounded delight, the bird fell fluttering a few yards from me. Life was ebbing fast, but the instinct of the mother was stronger than death itself, for, with a feeble flutter of her wings, the wounded bird struggled to the nest in which her young brood was huddled. And then, with a look of such pleading and reproach that my heart stood still at the ruin I had wrought, the little brown head toppled over, and only the dead body of the mother shielded her nestlings. My father congratulated me on the success of my first shot.

But as I gazed upon the ruffled heap of flesh and feathers that had a moment before seemed so surpassingly beautiful, I vowed that never again would I destroy a living thing. To my dying day I shall not forget the guilt and shame of that moment. The incident has colored all my writings.' And so the instinct of the sportsman and the instinct of the naturalist lead us by different paths to the same goal. It is life that we love. Dead things are, after all, only the shadows of living things. Frank Buckland, the famous Inspector of British Fisheries, used to contrast the salmon as he saw them living—'shining, lovely creatures, all lustrous and beautiful, supple and graceful, perfect water-fairies'—with 'their lifeless, battered and disfigured carcasses, mummied on ice, and lying in marble state on fishmongers' slabs.' And then, apostrophizing the dead fish, he asks, 'Who could believe, seeing you behind plate-glass, that in life you were so wondrously beautiful, so mysterious, so incomprehensible?' And has not Richard Jeffries told us how, over and over again, he was so enchanted by the beauty of the living creature that he saw along the muzzle of his upraised rifle, that he found it impossible to pull the trigger and shatter so much loveliness?

But it is time that we set ourselves to gather up the fruit of these excursions.

Have one more look at the nutbrown weasel, peeping from behind the pampas; at the black rabbit, squatting erect upon his haunches, ears pricked

up, his eyes fixed nervously upon us; and at the white-throated tuis flying in alarm from branch to branch in the lofty gums near by! Do you not feel your heart beat faster as you gaze at these shy, timid things? Are you not conscious of an emotion that arises partly from admiration of their prettiness and partly from the fear of frightening them away? Do you not feel as you fasten your eyes upon them as though you were out on the mossy projection in the bay, starting all the echoes? Life is answering to life!

Life.....Life!

Now, have one more look at the dead horse at Chapel Farm, the horse that, only yesterday, came at the call of its mistress; have one more look at the dead pheasant on the nest, unable to protect the brood it smothers; have one more look at the dead salmon on the fishmonger's slab, their luster vanished and their glory departed! Do you not feel a snatch at your heart as you gaze at these poor prostrate things? Are you not conscious, as your pity passes from you, that your soul is calling into the void? Do you not feel that, out in that dusty desert of death, your voice awakens no echoes, no responses?

Life!.....

And now look up! Look up from the lives that respond to our lives to that Life to which our lives are designed to respond!

'I am *the Life!*

'I am come that ye might have life!'

'Whosoever believeth in Me shall not perish, but have everlasting life!'

The life in which such Life stirs no answering vibration, in which such Life awakens no response, in which such Life starts no glad echo, is a life so like to death that the difference is indistinguishable!

PART II

I

THE JOYS OF THE ABSENT-MINDED

ABSENT-MINDED people are the aristocrats of the universe. I know that it is considered correct to eulogize presence of mind. A fig for presence of mind! Presence of mind is a paltry virtue and enormously overrated. The absent-minded people are the peers and princes of the intellectual realm. The very fact that they are absent-minded is proof positive of their spiritual affluence. For, after all, the laws that govern the mind are pretty much the same as those that govern the body. And the people whose bodies are always to be found in the same place are the people upon whom we pour most lavishly our pity and compassion. When I go to see poor old Betty Bridger, I know that I shall find her in her room, for she is bedridden. If her niece, on answering the door, were to tell me that her aunt had gone out shopping, I should fancy that the age of miracles had been revived. No, poor old Betty is never absent-bodied; she is always in the room at the top of the stairs. A pauper is never absent-bodied; he has gone to the workhouse for good, and you may always find him there. A convict is never absent-bodied, he has been sentenced to penal servi-

tude for life, and you know exactly where to find him. The people whose whereabouts you can always locate with precision are the people whom you never, never envy. If, however, when I call on John Brown, the maid tells me that he has just gone out, I know at once two important things concerning him. I know that he is *well,* and I know that he is *free.* Health and liberty are the heritage of the absent-bodied. Moreover, the higher men rise in the social scale the more elusively absent-bodied they become. If I want a paralytic or a pauper or a prisoner, I know exactly where to find him. But if I want a prince or a peer or a prelate, it is a very difficult matter to run him to earth. I call at his lordship's West-End mansion, and the butler tells me that the exalted object of my quest is staying at his seaside residence; I go to the seaside residence, and I learn that his lordship is at his shooting-box up among the hills; I hurry to the shooting-box, only to find that my lord has just left for the Continent. At this social altitude men are extremely absent-bodied.

Pass now from the material to the mental realm, and it will be seen at a glance that just as the *absent-bodied* men are the aristocrats of life's social circle, so the *absent-minded* men are the peers of the Universe of Thought. There are people whose minds, sad to say, are like Betty Bridger's body. Just as poor little Betty Bridger is never *absent-bodied,* so these unhappy people are never *absent-*

minded. It is depressing even to think of their pitiful infirmity. Their minds, like an invalid's body, are always in the same place. You would no more think of offering them a penny for their thoughts than you would think of offering Betty Bridger a penny for her postal address. It is only too self-evident. I have often stood beside Betty Bridger's bed and wished that some wondrous healer could stand on the opposite side of the couch and say, 'Arise and walk!' What a sight it would be! To see poor Betty stand upright on her feet and move about the room! I should then call to see her some afternoon, and be told at the door that Betty was out! At last, at last, she would be *absent-bodied!*

I have often wished that, in somewhat the same fashion, some wondrous healer could stand beside those poor sufferers who are incurably afflicted with Presence of Mind! Look at poor Andrew Fullerton! He is a well-meaning fellow, but, alas, his thoughts are chained to one theme. It is a very good theme as far as it goes, just as Betty Bridger's bed is a very good bed—as far as *it* goes. But the trouble is that Betty Bridger's bed does not go at all; it stands still! And so do poor Fullerton's thoughts. They never wander. I often wish that he had one little prodigal thought that would take its journey into a far country, even if, when there, it spent its substance on riotous living. But, like the elder brother of the parable, Fullerton's thoughts all prefer to stay at home. There is no wayward element any-

where. Wherever Fullerton's body may be, I always know where to find his mind. If only that wondrous healer could visit and heal him! His Presence of Mind would vanish. His thoughts, free as the winds, would fly in all directions. North, south, east, and west, they would scour all the continents and all the ages. Instead of being theme-ridden, as poor Betty is bedridden, he would be here, there, and everywhere! I should meet him on the street, and I should see at a glance that the old theme, like Betty's old bed, had been left behind at last! At last, at last, he is *absent-minded!*

I beheld the other afternoon a ridiculous spectacle. It was Speech Day at Haddington College. The orator who had been selected to do the honors of the occasion rose to address the pupils. Holding his pince-nez breast-high in his left hand, tucking his right under his coat-tails, and looking wonderfully wise, he proceeded to impress upon his youthful auditors the astounding proposition that the secret of success is—*Concentration!* I could scarcely keep my seat. Only the severest self-restraint prevented me from springing to my feet and shouting to the entire assembled company that the secret of success is—*Absence of Mind!* Concentration indeed! What assumption could be more fallacious? After I had cooled down, and my wrath had subsided, I forgave the little old wiseacre on the ground that he was merely repeating what all the Speech Day orators have been saying from the time of

Julius Cæsar. Poor little man! He thought that, since all the other speakers said it, it must be the correct thing to say. It evidently never occurred to him that the thing that everybody says is the thing that ought most to be suspected. 'Concentrate!' he said. 'Whatever you have to do, apply to it all your powers of thought.' I wonder if it ever occurred to him that the most important things that he ever does, he does without even being conscious that he does them. Not only does he do them without thinking about them; but, as a fact, he could not do them as well if he *did* think about them. What can be more important to him than that his heart should beat, his lungs breathe, and his digestive organs fulfil their functions? But he does all these vital things without concentration! He does them while he reads, while he writes, while he sleeps! Indeed, he is doing them as he stands there before the pupils of Haddington College! While he raises his pince-nez, flicks the tails of his coat, and labors the theory that everything depends upon Concentration, he is doing the most necessary things that he ever does without any concentration at all! He is doing them in complete absence of mind! When he gets home, and, throwing himself into an arm chair, rests after his strenuous and exhausting rhetorical effort, let the good little man concentrate upon the beating of his heart, upon the heaving of his lungs, upon the operation of his digestive organs! And he will discover that Concentration, so far from being

the secret of success, is the secret of all kinds of trouble. As soon as he concentrates upon the beating of his heart, his heart beats irregularly and unnaturally; as soon as he concentrates upon the workings of his lungs, his breath comes rapidly and jerkily; as soon as he concentrates on his digestive organs, he becomes conscious of sensations that are designed to be subconscious. The happy man is the man who does not know that he possesses a liver. On all such physiological themes he is gloriously absent-minded.

Haddington College, by the way, is a young ladies' college. Young ladies are perennially interesting. But they are most interesting when they forget that they are interesting. If, following the advice of the dear little man who has been brought to the college to address them, they concentrate upon their looks, their looks will suffer materially in consequence. But if, following the unuttered advice that I with such difficulty restrained, they become absent-minded as to their looks, the loss of all self-consciousness will considerably enhance their beauty. Personally, I find it easy to look natural except when a photographer tells me to look natural! I then proceed to pull a hideous grimace, and look as absurdly unnatural as possible! The photographer makes me concentrate upon my looks; and *concentration,* in spite of the little old gentleman at Haddington College, is the secret of failure! If the photographer could only have snapped me at some

absent-minded moment he would have secured a speaking likeness, for *Absence of Mind,* as I so nearly shouted out, is the secret of all real success! Sir J. R. Seeley declares that the British Empire was built absent-mindedly. Clive, Wolfe, Cook and that little handful of adventurers who, almost simultaneously, added India, Canada, and Australia to the dominions of the English King, never dreamed of piecing together a world-wide empire. 'England conquered and peopled half the world,' Seeley says, 'in a fit of absence of mind.' I feel sure that Seeley is right. His declaration has a wholesome ring about it; all the world's greatest achievements were the result of magnificent absent-mindedness.

Absent-mindedness is the masterpiece of Nature, the perfection of Art, and the crowning triumph of Grace. There is no phase of natural phenomena more wonderful than Nature's resort to absence of mind. I am going into the city this afternoon. Suppose that, when I turn hurriedly out of Swanston Street into Collins Street, I find myself confronted on the pavement by a huge Bengal tiger! I shall probably faint. At any rate, Nature will endeavor to compass that end; and, if I retain consciousness, it will be in spite of her. As I look into the glaring eyeballs of the tiger, Nature will say, in effect, 'This is a very awkward situation. The ideal thing would have been Absence of Body; but it is too late now to think about that. It is not with the body, however, that you suffer; it is with the

mind. The next best thing to Absence of Body is Absence of Mind.' Nature thereupon takes my mind from me, and I lie unconscious at the street-corner. In that comatose condition, the tiger treats my prone body with contempt. Nature has saved me by a masterly policy of inactivity. I owe my life to Absence of Mind.

One of the most eminent of our sociologists has said that the most beneficent invention of the nineteenth century was the invention of chloroform. I mention this in support of my statement that absence of mind is the perfection of Art. No science has developed more remarkably during the past few years than the science of anæsthetics; and the science of anæsthetics is, after all, merely a contrivance for securing absence of mind. The surgeon thinks that, while he reconstructs my bones, I myself had better not be present. I should only feel embarrassed, self-conscious, and awkward. So he arranges that, while my body is under his treatment, my mind shall be over the hills and far away. The climax of surgical skill is represented by absence of mind.

My third claim—the claim that absent-mindedness is the crowning triumph of Grace—needs no substantiation. It is self-evident. The best people in the world are the people who live lovely lives without being conscious of it. They do good without thinking of what they do. They do it absent-mindedly. This, I say, is the crowning triumph of Grace. It only comes with the years. There was

a time when every evil thing made its appeal to them, and had to be resolutely resisted. There was a time when every opportunity of extending life's courtesies and kindness had to be definitely considered and resolutely embraced. Like a weed in a garden, selfishness had to be diligently uprooted; and, like delicate flowers, the lovelier qualities had to be deliberately planted and jealously cultivated. But, with the passage of the years, all this became habitual, almost mechanical. Nowadays, they live beautiful lives, and do noble and gracious deeds, as a matter of course, and are surprised at hearing others sing their praise. Jesus took great care to make His virtues habitual. *"As His custom was,* He went up to the synagogue." He knew that, unless the minor graces become mechanical, the major graces must become impossible. I have often thought that, in His earlier days—the days of His boyhood, the days of His youth, the days of His labor at the bench—Jesus must have schooled Himself to do absentmindedly a thousand little thoughtful and unselfish kindnesses or He could never have brought Himself, in the crisis of His life and the vigor of His manhood, to die for us men on the bitter and shameful Cross.

II

'THE SUN HAS RISEN IN THE WEST!'

MARK TWAIN, in one of his frolics, tells how he and his companions toiled all night up the slopes of one of the mountains of Switzerland in order to see the sunrise from the summit. That gorgeous spectacle was numbered among the wonders of the world. Arrived at the pinnacle, heated with their climb, they soon found themselves shivering in the piercing cold of that bleak and snow-capped height. They wrapt themselves up as snugly as they could, huddled together under the shelter of a huge rock, and settled down to await the glory that had brought them to so inhospitable a spot. After an unconscionable period spent in this cramped and comfortless situation, it appeared to them that, although the sun had not risen, the daylight was becoming more and more pronounced. They started up to investigate the mystery. To their horror they discovered that they had been sitting with their faces to the West; and, over the back of the boulders that had sheltered them from the cold wind, the sun was well up in the sky!

I thought this very droll when I first came across it, and laughed as lustily as anybody else. But I

have to-day moderated my judgment. An experience has befallen me that has made me wonder whether the situation of Mark Twain and his companions was really as ludicrous as I once supposed. Does the sun never rise in the West? When I set out this afternoon I knew that my path would take me across the hills. I promised myself that I would not hurry. I thought of a certain stately old gum-tree that I know well, with a log lying temptingly beside it. I thought of the wattles all in their golden glory, of the hawthorn hedges just coming into tender leaf, and of a score of other lovely things. Why should I not pause for half an hour to drink in the full, rich fragrance of the gorse and to listen to the crickets in the grass near by? I slipped a book into my pocket. It chanced to be *A Boswell of Baghdad,* by Mr. E. V. Lucas. I found my blue-gum-tree just as I had pictured it—such friends are amazingly constant and dependable—and feasted my eyes on the panorama before me. In the course of my enjoyment, I turned over the pages of my Baghdad Boswell, just to see what it was all about, when I came, haphazard, upon this: 'My friend,' says Buri Taj Al-Muluk, 'approached from the West, riding a grey horse, and I exclaimed: "Glory to the Almighty, the sun has risen in the West!" ' It was this that brought back to my mind the passage in Mark Twain at which I laughed so heartily long years ago.

'Glory to the Almighty, the sun has risen in the

West!' It is a characteristically Oriental way of describing the coming of a friend at an unlikely moment, or from an unexpected direction. It reminds me of a pair of incidents—one in our own history, and one in that of France.

For the French story I must go back to the stern and pitiless days of the Great Revolution. The episode stands out on the terrible pages of that grim record like a bright star shining steadily in a stormy sky; its pathos falls upon our ears like the song of a lark amid the noise and confusion of a great battle. Marie Antoinette, the unhappy Queen of France, had fallen into the merciless clutches of the revolutionists. They threw her into prison, heaped upon her every shameful indignity that the most debased and most barbarous imagination could conceive, and savagely gloated over the prospect of imbruing their cruel hands in her royal blood. In that dark hour her myriad friends fell away from her like autumn leaves. Fearing the wrath of the mob, those who had been most frequently at the Tuileries became loudest in their clamor for the execution of the King and Queen. To this sinister rule there was, however, one radiant exception. When Marie Antoinette first came to France, the Princess de Lamballe was a girl of about her own age. She had been widowed at eighteen. Her sad but beautiful face, her gentle and artless manner, her sweet and attractive disposition, won the heart of the young Queen at once; and for twenty years

they were bosom friends. When the revolution broke out, however, the Princess was at a distance and in perfect safety. Without a moment's hesitation she sent word to the Queen that she was leaving for Paris. The Queen wrote back entreating her to remain in her present security. Later on, when the guillotine had done its worst for the poor Princess, the Queen's letter was found hidden in the tresses of her long, fair hair. She had fancied that there, at least, it would have been secure, after her head had fallen, from probing fingers and prying eyes. The Princess ignored the letter and hastened to Paris. Her coming was the one gleam of brightness that shone upon the poor Queen in those dark and fearful days. When the Princess de Lamballe came to Paris, Marie Antoinette's sun rose in the West! And when the Princess was torn from her and dragged to the scaffold, she felt that her sun had set for ever. The poor Queen wrote down that date as the day of her own death. Life was not worth calling life after her friend had gone out of it.

The companion picture which I promised from our own history is provided for us by Lord Morley in his *Life of Cobden*. It concerns, primarily, not Cobden, but Bright. We all remember how Bright's beautiful young wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, was suddenly snatched from him. Bright was inconsolable. Let him tell his own story. 'It was in 1841,' he says. 'The sufferings throughout the country were fearful. I was at Leamington,

and on the day when Cobden called upon me—for he happened to be there at the time on a visit to some relatives—I was in the depths of grief, I might almost say of despair; for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me, and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, "There are thousands of houses in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now," he said, "when the first paroxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest till the Corn Law is repealed." I accepted his invitation. I knew that the description he had given of the homes of thousands was not an exaggerated description. I felt in my conscience that there was a work which somebody must do, and therefore I accepted his invitation, and from that time we never ceased to labor hard on behalf of the resolution which we had made.' Everybody knows how, through the seven years that followed, the reformers endured ignominy, ridicule and persecution, but struggled on until their cause was triumphant and the world was ringing with their fame. Everybody knows *that;* but everybody does not know the infinite solace which that historic task administered to the breaking

heart of Bright. To the end of his life he felt that the coming of Cobden was his salvation. The dawn arose out of the clouds of sunset. Glory to the Almighty, the sun has risen in the West!

But I do not quite see why we are confining our attention so exclusively to the matter of friendship. Surely there are other respects in which the sun sometimes rises in the western sky! John Milton would certainly have said so! In his biography of the poet, Mark Pattison tells us that, at the age of forty-three, blindness fell upon Milton like the sentence of death, and he fancied for awhile that he had reached the end of everything. His only gleam of comfort lay in the fact that he had written, during his last year of eyesight, a pamphlet on the Civil War! 'He could not foresee,' his biographer remarks, 'that in less than ten years his pamphlet would be merged in the obsolete mass of civil war tracts, and only be mentioned because it had been written by the author of *Paradise Lost.*' The new day dawned with the coming of the darkness. Before his blindness, Milton wrote political pamphlets; only that and nothing more! In his sightlessness he developed an imagination which, for sublimity and splendor, has never been surpassed. The dawn rose out of the sunset.

And what of the surprise of life? Is it not true to the experience of all of us that our joys rush out at us from unexpected places, our treasures issue from the darkest mines, our suns rise in the West?

I was spending an evening last week with my old friend Harold Coverdale, the minister at Foxton. After the children were all in bed, Mrs. Coverdale brought her crochet-work and took the chair opposite her husband; and, somehow, the conversation turned to the days of auld lang syne. Harold made some reference to his courtship and then burst into laughter. When the storm subsided he went on to say that, in his student days, he was one afternoon leaving the college buildings when he unexpectedly met the Principal, Professor McDonald.

'Oh, Coverdale,' the Principal exclaimed, 'you are the very man I want to see. Mr. Thompson, of Northend, has been taken ill; and they want a supply for Sunday. I particularly wish you to go.'

Harold laughed again at the memory of it. Then, turning to me, he said:

'You know, I had another little scheme for that particular week-end. Bryce, Barkell and I were going away together; and, as it was extremely unlikely that we should all three be free again, I was most unwilling to shatter the project. I suggested other names, hinted that I was myself already engaged, and at last begged that I might on this occasion be excused.

' "I'm sorry," muttered the old professor, "but, as I told you, I particularly wish you to go. The fact is, I was talking to Mr. Thompson quite recently and was telling him about you. He wires specially

asking that, if possible, you should be sent. I shall be glad if you will take the appointment."

'There was nothing more to be said. I went round and told Bryce and Barkell, who joined me in invoking all kinds of maledictions on the head of the old curmudgeon. With wry faces and rebellious hearts we abandoned our excursion. And on the Saturday I set out in no amiable mood to preach at Northend. In my heart I was wishing confusion to Northend and everybody in it. And—would you believe it?—that very night, at Northend, *I met her!*'

He glanced fondly across the hearthrug at his wife. Delight had emerged from disappointment. The dawn had sprung out of the sunset. Glory to the Almighty, the sun has risen in the West! Our greatest gladness bursts upon us from the most unlikely places.

That was the miracle that astounded the Magi. Nobody dreamed that new light would spring out of the West. To the West was Palestine, Galilee, Nazareth; and can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Yet it was in the West that the star appeared! 'And lo, the star which they saw when in the East went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was.' The world's new day had dawned! Glory to the Almighty, the sun has risen in the West!

The great classic conversions tell the same tale. Paul, Luther, Wesley, Bunyan; it matters not to

which you go; each is the story of the sun rising in the West. A man comes to the fag-end of everything and is in uttermost despair. 'Now,' says Bunyan in his *Grace Abounding,* 'now I grow worse; now I am farther from conversion than ever I was before. Wherefore I began to sink greatly in my soul, and began to entertain such discouragement in my heart as laid it as low as hell. If now I should have burned at the stake, I could not believe that Christ had love for me. Alas! I could neither hear Him, nor see Him, nor feel Him, nor favor any of His things; I was driven as with a tempest. Sometimes I would tell my condition to the people of God; which, when they heard, they would pity me, and would tell me of the promises; but they had as good have told me that I must reach the sun with my finger as have bidden me receive or rely upon the promises. Oh, my inward pollution! I was more loathsome in mine own eyes than a toad, and I thought I was so in God's eyes too. Sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water would bubble out of a fountain. I thought now, that every one had a better heart than I had; I could have changed hearts with anybody; I thought none but the devil himself could equal me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own vileness, deeply into despair; for I concluded that this condition that I was in could not stand with a state of grace. Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God;

sure, I am given up to the devil and to a reprobate mind; and thus I continued a long while, even for some years together.' Yet out of this impenetrable gloom broke the light that never was on sea or shore! Out of this stormy sunset rose the dawn that has illumined the whole world!

Some day my life's little day will soften down to eventide. My sunset hours will come. As the soldiers say, I shall go West! And then, I know, there will arise, out of the dusk, a dawning fairer than any dawn that has yet broken upon me. Out of the last tints of sunset there shall rise a day such as I shall never have known before; a day that shall restore to me all that the other days have taken from me, a day that shall never fade into twilight. 'Glory to the Almighty,' I shall cry, 'the sun has risen in the West!'

III

SCARLET GERANIUMS

The scarlet geraniums under my window are at their best just now, and I plucked a handful this morning in memory of Little Doctor Dignity. The little old gentleman would have become a centenarian to-day if he had lived. He was born exactly a hundred years ago. That is why I can think of nobody else this morning, especially when the flaming heads of scarlet catch my eye. For I never saw Little Doctor Dignity without a scarlet geranium in his buttonhole. We were all very fond of the little doctor. In those far-off days no man in the Mosgiel Church was more revered, more trusted, more beloved than he. His real name was quite an ordinary affair; but that did not matter in the least; it was never used. No ordinary name would have suited so extraordinary a personage. Perhaps it was some instinctive feeling of this kind that led us to abandon his ordinary name as hopeless, and to give him a name of our own. His ordinary name fitted him as a ready-made suit, picked at random from a box, might have been expected to fit him. But the name by which we knew him fitted him like a glove. Harold Fortescue, in telling his story of Michael Murphy, says that that redoubtable philosopher once

wondered why pigs were called pigs. He opened his heart on his troublesome problem to Patrick O'Halloran. O'Halloran pointed to a sty not far away. The pigs had just been fed. Each of the animals had his forelegs in the trough, and all were struggling greedily for the morsels most esteemed. 'Shure,' said O'Halloran, 'and what else could ye call them?' Precisely! I have exactly the same feeling in regard to Little Doctor Dignity. What else could you call him? With us he was always 'the doctor.' He responded to it with perfect ease; you would have supposed that a framed diploma of some kind hung conspicuously on his wall. He must have known his full appellation, although I never heard it employed in his presence. We addressed him as 'doctor'; only in his absence did we speak of him as 'Little Doctor Dignity'; and the arrangement worked admirably.

He was a lovable little man, with a ruddy face, a merry laugh, sparkling eyes, and silky, snow-white hair. He had an annuity of some kind and spent a good deal of his time in visiting. I often came upon him at the firesides of the old people and at the bedsides of the sick. If you met him on the street you would notice that, while he was quietly and neatly dressed, his attire betrayed one peculiarity. The left-hand pocket of his coat was always flat and smooth, as though his hand had never entered it; but the right-hand pocket bulged considerably and was distinctly worn. The children

were best qualified to explain that mystery. I remember being with him on the street one day when we met a tiny little thing hurrying home from school. The doctor's hand was in his pocket in a second. But, in stooping to play with the toddler, his buttonhole came to grief. Perhaps the child's hand touched it; I am not sure. At any rate, the bright red petals were strewn upon the path and only the green stalk remained in his coat. A look of singular gravity, almost of pain, overspread the doctor's face. He took out his handkerchief and carefully brushed the petals from the footpath. 'I should not like them to be trampled on!' he said. I thought it strange at the time; but afterward I understood.

Why was he called Little Doctor Dignity? I fancy the title was first given him because of his extreme jealousy for the dignity of all sacred things. The doctor was an officer of the church. I can see him now as he used to sit in his place in the very center of the diaconal semicircle, right opposite me. I never knew him to come late to a meeting; I never knew him to get excited; I never knew him to make a long or elaborate speech. And yet he wielded an enormous influence. A word from the doctor went a very long way. He had a crucible of his own to which he submitted most of our crude and immature proposals.

'Would this be quite dignified?' he would ask quietly, peering over his glasses; and many a plausi-

ble scheme looked like a bubble that had been pricked as soon as the doctor had raised that searching question.

There was nothing stilted or artificial about the doctor. He had too much respect for his dignity to stand on it. He was the essence of simplicity. And the singular thing about his characteristic test was that, like a two-edged sword, it cut both ways. Gavin, for example, was severely practical. He had not a scrap of æstheticism in his composition. Whenever some scheme was submitted for the ornamentation of the church, a thunderstorm swept the face of Gavin. His critics thought him parsimonious, but they did him an injustice. He was not niggardly. He spent money freely on his own home and he gave to the church with a liberal hand. But, perhaps, because the money that he gave had cost him hard and strenuous toil, he watched very narrowly every item of church expenditure. When the church needed a new carpet, or a new table, or something of the kind, Gavin's suggestion was invariably of a type severely plain. His presence was an effective check on ecclesiastical extravagance, but sometimes he went to the opposite extreme. And, as surely as, at the opposite extreme, he proposed a purchase upon which nobody could look with pride, the doctor looked anxiously over his glasses and asked his question. And, as soon as the question was asked, Gavin knew that his proposal was dead and buried.

Andrew, on the other hand, liked to go in for the very best. In his judgment, nothing could be too good for the church. The principle was excellent, but it can be carried too far. At least, it could be carried too far at Mosgiel. The Mosgiel church was the home of all our hearts. To us there was no place like it. But we could not conceal from ourselves the fact that, from a strictly architectural point of view, the building had its limitations. There was a distinct difference, to put it mildly, between the Mosgiel church and St. Paul's Cathedral. But for that difference, Andrew's suggestions would have been excellent. But, bearing that difference in mind, they were sometimes open to criticism. Things that would have appeared quite in place at St. Paul's would have looked incongruous and even gaudy at Mosgiel. A tradesman's daughter does not look well tricked out like a millionaire's heiress or a foreign princess. As soon as Andrew proposed a course which would have exposed us to criticism of this kind, the doctor interpolated his fatal question. We saw at once that Simplicity has its dignities as well as Splendor; and Andrew rarely failed to see the doctor's point.

It was thus, if I remember rightly, that the name was first conferred. But, after all, there were only eight of us at those solemn conclaves—the seven deacons and myself—and it is inconceivable that the appellation would have become public property, save on the ground of its intrinsic suitability. Pro-

fessor William James once said of Professor Henri Bergson that his language fitted his thought as elastic silk underclothing fits the body. The figure recurs to my mind as I admire the perfection with which the doctor's popular cognomen fitted his personality. We called him Little Doctor Dignity because he *was* Little Doctor Dignity. Along that line there is no more to be said. This morning I catch myself setting out on involuntary voyages of discovery. Wherein, I keep saying to myself, wherein did the dignity of the little doctor consist!

And, now that I come to think of it, it occurs to me that I never saw the doctor in a temper. Gavin and Tammas and Andrew and Davie used to get angry and excited on occasions, but the doctor, never! He was always collected and calm. I do not mean that he was incapable of strong feeling; I only mean that he was incapable of giving his strong feeling a weak expression. A flash of lightning often does more damage than many reverberating peals of thunder. The doctor could reprove with a smile; he could incline his head, peer over his glasses, and give you a look of surprise that would make you feel thoroughly ashamed of yourself; he could knit his brows as though in pain and reduce you to abject contrition. But he never stormed. I imagine that he would have regarded an exhibition of passion as a very undignified affair. I once saw a man walking up Grosvenor Hill leading an enormous mastiff at the end of a chain; five minutes

later I saw the mastiff descending the hill dragging his struggling master behind him. It was not an edifying spectacle. The doctor would have placed a show of temper in the same category. One of the first elements in dignity is control.

Nor do I remember seeing him in a hurry. He had a good deal to do, but he always gave me the impression that he had allotted to each task its proper time and had the day well in mind. I have often met him on his way to the station; he was always walking quietly to the train with just about as much time at his disposal as would allow him comfortably to catch it. I have already said that, at church, he was never late. I remember once finding myself under the necessity of changing a hymn. It was at a week-evening service. I asked the doctor if there was any hymn that he would particularly like. He asked for 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind.' I walked home with him that night, and asked him if he had any special reason for the choice. And he told me that he always enjoyed singing the verse:

> Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
> Till all our strivings cease;
> Take from our souls the strain and stress,
> And let our ordered lives confess
> The beauty of Thy peace!

'Our ordered lives!'—the words seemed to acquire a fresh significance and a new beauty as I reviewed them in the light of the little doctor's winsome

personality. I have never since joined in the singing of that lovely hymn without a wayward thought of him.

But here I am, taking the doctor's dignity to pieces! You never discover, by that meddlesome process of analysis, the elusive beauty of a thing as a whole. I suppose that the secret of the doctor's dignity lay in his perfect simplicity, his charming naturalness, his utter innocence of any kind of affectation. He was dignified because he never tried to be dignified. The man who is inordinately anxious to appear dignified usually walks on stilts to make himself seem bigger than he really is. The performance is a comedy as long as he contrives to remain perpendicular, and it develops into a screaming farce or a painful tragedy as soon as he abruptly descends to the horizontal. At neither stage is it dignified. Our little doctor made no such mistakes. True dignity, as Wordsworth says in his 'Yew-tree Seat':

> True dignity abides with him alone
> Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,
> Can still suspect, and still revere himself,
> In lowliness of heart.

The words constitute themselves a lifelike photograph of our Little Doctor Dignity.

I used to think that the doctor's life was destitute of pathos and romance. So easily do we misjudge each other! On the day on which we buried him—a heavy day in Mosgiel—I discovered my mistake.

He boarded with a gracious old Scottish lady who had been very kind to him. One Sunday afternoon —it happened to be Easter Sunday—he had complained of a strange weariness and had gone to lie down. Impressed by the silence, his landlady had gone to his room a couple of hours later, and had found him quite dead on his bed. His hands were folded as though in sleep. On the table beside him were—his Bible and *a vase of scarlet geraniums.*

It seemed that he had told his landlady some months before that if anything happened to him he wished me to go through all his papers, sorting out those that would require attention, and destroying those that were of no further use. I set to work next morning. In the prosecution of this melancholy task I came upon a packet of papers neatly folded, and secured with a piece of blue ribbon. As I untied the bow there fluttered to the ground the faded petals of some pressed geraniums. They looked almost like confetti as they lay at my feet on the floor. The letters were love-letters! I learned from their perusal that they had plighted their troth, he and she, as lad and lassie, among the Scottish hills. Then, seeing little prospect of advancement at home, he had emigrated; and she had promised that, when he had built a nest in the new and distant land, she would follow him across the seas. But, alas, the tasks that awaited him were tough, and the world

was wide, and the time was long; and, after all, she was only a girl! Courtship by correspondence was a tedious business; each letter took three months in reaching its destination. She saw the love-light in another face; she lent her ear to the wooing accents of another voice. And, while our little doctor worked on one side of the world, she wedded on the other. In almost every letter there were references to the geraniums. The bright flowers held some mystic meaning for them. Perhaps it was her favorite; or perhaps it was among the geraniums that he kissed her for the first time, and the blossoms matched her blushes. I could not tell. I only know that she married, and married badly. There is a long break in the letters—a gap of twenty years. It may be that, during those unkind years, her heart turned wistfully back to her earlier love. It may be that, during those bitter years, the geraniums looked reproachfully, almost angrily, at her. It may be; but I am not the historian of life's may-bes. We must return to facts. And the facts are that, after twenty years, her husband was brought home dead from the mill. Our little doctor read of the accident in the newspaper that came by the mail; he wrote a letter of restrained but affectionate sympathy; and the correspondence was renewed. Once more they became engaged. To his delight she sailed. There are no more letters. The only other document is a faded newspaper. It contains the report of a wreck off the coast of Brazil. There

are two lists—the list of the *saved* and the list of the *lost*. Her name is among the *lost!*

This was in the morning. In the afternoon we buried him. I rode from the cottage to the grave with his doctor.

'The little man must have been a great sufferer,' the doctor remarked thoughtfully. I was astonished.

'It seems incredible,' I replied. 'I knew him intimately for many years, and this is the first that I have heard of it!'

'I dare say,' the doctor answered, 'but he died of a pitiless disease that must have been a perpetual agony to him; and I know, from occasional consultations, that he was seldom free from pain!'

I suppose our Little Doctor Dignity had some instinctive feeling in that gentle soul of his that, in a world that is sanctified by suffering, it would have been undignified to have talked of his own aches and pains; and that, in a world that has tears enough as it is, there could have been no profit in publishing his terrible but secret grief.

Whenever, in the days that followed, I had occasion to visit the little cemetery on the side of the hill, I noticed that bunches of geraniums had been left, perhaps by the children, on the little doctor's grave. How well they remembered those red, red buttonholes of his! How little they guessed the red, red secret that lay behind the flowers!

IV

A BUSH JUBILEE

I

We had just finished breakfast, and I had moved off in the direction of the study. But the siren-song of a thrush in an apple-tree near the window had lured me, bareheaded and paper in hand, into the garden. Before surrendering myself to the morning's tasks, I took a turn up and down the lawn. The soft, rich sunshine of early summer seemed to enfold one like a warm caress, while the breeze that smote my face, played with my hair and fluttered the paper in my hand, had just enough winter left in it to give it the taste of a tonic. The hills around Mosgiel were marked by sharp contrasts of strong colorings—bright splashes of green where the sunlight caught the ridges and deep blotches of shadow in the intervening valleys. I was just turning my back on all these ecstasies, and was preparing for the second time to bury myself in the study, when I was startled by the click of the latch of the gate. I turned, and who should be striding up the gravel path but my old friend John Broadbanks?

'What on earth brings you over from Silverstream so early?' I inquired.

'Sit down,' he said, pointing to the veranda steps, 'sit down, and I'll tell you all about it.'

It seemed that the strain of the winter's work had told upon him; he had endured a maddening headache for nearly three weeks; had at last consulted the doctor; and had been ordered away for a rest.

'I'm going into the back-blocks,' he said, with a chuckle. 'I know of an accommodation-house right back in the bush, miles and miles from anywhere. I am going up there for a fortnight, and shall spend the time poking about. And you've got to come; that's the point: *you've got to come!*'

And, as usually happened, John had his way.

II

It was the second of the two Sundays that we spent at this remote resting-place. John and I started early and plunged into the bush. The sandy track was so overgrown with fern and scrub that it was at times difficult to follow it. About a mile and a half from the house, however, it emerged upon a crazy old road, covered with grass and dotted with clumps of fern, but showing the marks of recent wheels. We had not proceeded far along this primitive thoroughfare when we were startled by the thud of a horse's hoofs, on the soft track behind us. A minute later the rider swept round the bend and overtook us, and proved to be a young girl in a pink blouse and sunbonnet, riding astride. She passed

us at a canter, and quickly vanished from our sight. We had scarcely gone half a mile farther when we heard the rumble of wheels. Looking round, we beheld a spring-cart, driven by a young farmer whose wife sat beside him. When the vehicle passed we noticed that a boy and a girl were sitting on the floor of the cart behind them. To be twice overtaken among these solitudes was so unusual that we wondered what such an experience could portend. Then quite suddenly, the track led us past a clump of big trees, round a sharp curve, and we came upon a large green clearance on which there stood a little wooden school-house. Why it was put there, we could not tell; there was no settlement anywhere about. Perhaps it was centrally situated between such dwellings as there were—some a few miles in one direction and others a few miles in another. At any rate, here was the girl with the pink blouse and sunbonnet; she had tied her horse to a neighboring tree, and was chatting with two other girls who had ridden in from other directions. Here, too, was the little family that we had seen in the spring-cart. The man was attending to the horse while the woman was sauntering with some friends toward the school-house. Little bands of men stood here and there among the tethered horses. We asked what had brought them together.

'Oh, it's just the service,' one of them explained. 'We only have church up here whenever the preacher happens to be in these parts.'

We entered the school-house with them and took a seat. An elderly gentleman, with snowy hair and beard, finely-chiselled face lit up by a most captivating smile, bright eyes that almost twinkled, and of a singularly gracious and lovable demeanor, was conferring with a young girl who sat by the little baby-organ. They were evidently selecting the hymns. About a dozen worshipers were already in their places. Through the open windows there rushed upon us the strong fragrance of the bush. I watched a noisy crowd of brightly colored parrots disporting themselves in the great branches of the tall peppermint-trees near by. They seemed excited by the unusual bustle and commotion below. Then something alarmed them, and away they flew! The silence that followed was broken a few seconds later by the song of a lark some distance away. And, somehow, the thoughts suggested by that song in the skies seemed as fitting a preparation for worship as the finest voluntary.

III

I glanced at my watch. It was two minutes to eleven. Precisely at the hour the old gentleman took his seat at the school-house desk. When he rose to announce the opening hymn, his voice confirmed that impression of refinement which the sweetness of his face and the charm of his manner had already conveyed. We afterwards discovered

that he was a man with a history. He was a Master of Arts of an English University, and had for many years been the honored and beloved minister of a great city church. His health had broken down, however, and he had been ordered to New Zealand. But in New Zealand health would only abide with him as long as he remained in the bush. In the towns and cities he was as ill as ever. He had stayed for six months at the very boarding-house that was, for the time being, our own retreat. During those months the people scattered over the country had got to know him and had become very fond of him. They had persuaded him to conduct an occasional service at the school-house. During the six months his vigor increased amazingly. And so it was arranged that he should make his home in the district sometimes a guest at this farm and sometimes a guest at that one. He lived among the people, preaching to them as he had strength and opportunity. He had been there for some years now, and everywhere his name was held in reverence and affection. All this we learned when, later on, we returned to the boarding-house. And the knowledge imparted an added interest to all that fell from his lips at the school.

IV

'You may be interested to know,' said the old gentleman in a quiet, musical voice, when the time for the address arrived, 'you may be interested to

know that I am celebrating to-day, with deep thankfulness, the fiftieth anniversary of my ordination.' John glanced at me meaningly; we silently congratulated each other upon having chanced upon so very felicitous a celebration. 'I have been thinking about it a good deal this week,' the preacher continued, 'and have tried to recall the first sermon that I preached after it. I remember going to see my mother and father about it, and asking their advice. My father was a minister, but his health failed and he had to give up. He was bedridden at the time of my ordination and he passed away not long after. I told him that I could not make up my mind as to a text for that first sermon. "A text!" he said, in surprise. "Why, my boy, there is only one. Preach about the *unsearchable riches.* I myself took that text as the subject of my first sermon, and I have been glad of it ever since. Take it as the text of *your* first sermon, too!" And so it came about that on the Sunday after my ordination I gave out as my text the words, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles *the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" I forget all that I said about it. My notes, if they still exist, are somewhere in England. I am afraid that what I said must have been painfully crude and sadly disappointing. The text has been much in my mind during the past week, and I could not help wondering at the way in which it has grown upon me in the course of fifty years.'

V

'I really think,' he went on, 'I really think that in those days I failed to notice all that was implied in the word *"unsearchable."* The *unsearchable* riches! As far as I can remember, I took it for granted that it means *unfindable.* I said that we might each discover some part of this abounding wealth; but that no one of us could find all of it. Soon afterward, however, it flashed upon me that it is not only unfindable; it is *unsearchable.* It is as though we were told that, in addition to the diamonds buried in earthly mines, the mountains of the moon are smothered with them! For, beyond the realms of our search, there are riches that are unsearchable; *the unsearchable riches of Christ!'*

VI

'I was very interested the other day,' the little old gentleman continued, 'in noticing that Dr. Weymouth translates the word as *"exhaustless"*—the *exhaustless* wealth of Christ. It reminded me,' he said, 'of the short-sighted folly of Spain in the days of her Western conquests. When she had the whole of the New World open to her, she chose Mexico and Peru, because there the soil literally glittered with gold, and she left the hardier climes of the North—the boundless prairies that have since become the world's wealthiest wheat-fields—for any power that cared to claim them. How quickly the soil of Mex-

ico and of Peru was exhausted! And how poor Spain seemed when all the gold was gone! On my way out to New Zealand,' he continued, breaking into reminiscence, a slight sadness in his voice hinting at the strain upon his faith that the shattering of his English hopes had represented to him, 'on my way out to New Zealand I visited the exhausted diamond mines of South Africa and crossed the gold fields of Western Australia. Here, on every side, were the traces of the great gold-rush. For miles and miles the earth had been torn up in the days of the diggings. And now it is all a desert, sandy solitude! The gold-fields were so soon exhausted! And as I thought of all this, it seemed to illumine my father's text as Dr. Weymouth translates it—"the *exhaustless* wealth"—"that I should preach among the Gentiles the *exhaustless* wealth of Christ!"'

VII

Then the old gentleman's talk took quite another turn. The light thrown upon his father's text—and his own—by Dr. Weymouth had encouraged him to consult other rendering. And, as he produced his next discovery, his eyes sparked as if, in those exhausted gold fields that he had visited, he had suddenly found a long-neglected nugget. His ecstasy was like the excitement of a schoolboy as he carefully draws the coveted bird's nest from the hedge, 'I find,' he said, 'that Dr. Moffatt renders it "the

fathomless riches of Christ"—an ocean, not of water, but of wealth!' He had evidently made a study of the science of the sea. He spoke familiarly of its unplumbed depths, those dark, mysterious profundities that had defied every invasion of the measuring line. 'My sins are down there,' he exclaimed abruptly, falling into a kind of soliloquy; 'my sins are down in those unfathomable depths. God has cast them into the depths of the sea. And, since my sins are in the unfathomable depths, the grace that put them there must be unfathomable too. When your hair is as grey as mine,' he said, turning particularly to the young people near the front—and I noticed that the girl in the pink blouse and sunbonnet was drinking in every word—'when your hair is as grey as mine, and the days before you as few, you will know the sweetness of that thought —the sins that lie in the unfathomable depths—the *fathomless* riches of Jesus.' How his eyes sparkled as he spoke!

VIII

'I have not quite finished yet,' continued the preacher, with the glee of a miser turning over his hoard, 'for I have found yet one other translation. The fact is,' he observed parenthetically, 'the fact is that these great New Testament words are like the sea itself. As the ocean swallows up all the rivers that flow into it, so a word like this absorbs all the meanings that these English terms suggest. It is

Dr. Rendel Harris who has given me my last thought, for that great scholar has translated it "the *unexplorable* wealth of Christ." ' As, in his quiet, confidential, but telling fashion, he commented upon the idea that this tremendous word presented, we seemed to be standing on some dizzy mountain-peak, shading our eyes with our hands and looking out across continents so vast that Australia and Africa were mere islets in comparison. Here was not only the unexplored, but the unexplorable! The *unexplorable* riches of Christ!

IX

As soon as the service was over, John and I approached the desk and shook hands with the old gentleman. We felicitated him upon the jubilee of his ministry. The thought of his ripe experience, the consciousness of his mellow saintliness, and the subtle influence of his old-world courtesy and beautiful refinement, somewhat overawed us. We felt as a couple of schoolboys may be supposed to feel as they congratulate the headmaster on some academic distinction. But the old scholar soon put us at our ease, and I am glad now that we stayed. For, before the thrush in my apple-tree sang his song of welcome to another summer, the gentle old man had preached his last sermon and had been buried in the bush by the people who loved and reverenced him. The smile and the counsel that he gave us when he

found that we were ministers will abide with us like a tender benediction.

'Remember,' he said, laying his hands upon our shoulders, 'remember the *unsearchable* riches. I so often think of Dr. Richard Conyers, who was vicar of Helmsley, in Yorkshire, more than a hundred years ago. It is said of him that he toiled among his parishioners with tireless diligence but with ever-growing disappointment. Then, one day, he suddenly came upon this text—my father's text and mine. *"Unsearchable!"* he said to himself, *"unsearchable!* Why, I have preached of a Saviour who was very wonderful but still perfectly intelligible. I must go back to my pulpit and preach the *unsearchable* riches!" And from that date his whole ministry was transfigured.'

On our way home along the grassy road, the girl in the pink blouse and sunbonnet, and the family in the spring-cart, again overtook us. But I fancied that a new light had come into all their faces. They had gazed upon the wealth that is *unsearchable, inexhaustible, unfathomable, unexplorable!* And I like to think that, out among those vast solitudes of theirs, where the bushbirds call to each other over the old preacher's well-kept grave, many of their hearts are secretly singing for joy over the possession of such unutterable treasure.

V

THE SOUL OF AN OLD ARM CHAIR

I STUMBLED this afternoon on one of the most pathetic spectacles that I have witnessed for many a long day. The weather this week has not been on its best behavior; wintry conditions are yielding with a bad grace to the inevitable conquest of spring; and, at the moment of which I write, a steady, driving rain was compelling me to turn up the collar of my coat and to fasten it more securely about me. I was just turning into Westbury Grove when a carrier's cart drove past me. It contained nothing but a stately old arm chair of massive bulk and aristocratic bearing. The storm was beating upon it; the rain was trickling down its back and arms and legs; yet somehow it looked neither dejected nor disconsolate in its unwonted and unhappy situation. Its back was turned upon the horse and its driver, as though, disdaining to notice that it was absolutely at their mercy, it was gazing wistfully back at the old home from which the exigencies of an auction sale had so ruthlessly snatched it.

As it passed me I admired its ample proportions, its comfortable build, and its antique carving; but

I admired still more the dauntless spirit which the old chair seemed to be exhibiting in the day of its adversity. I recalled all the tales that I had heard of great souls, suddenly reduced from affluence to poverty, bravely holding their heads erect amid shipwreck and disaster. The chair rode on, upright and dignified; chivalrously true to its own honorable past; haughtily indifferent as to its uncertain future; declining to be humiliated by the misfortunes that had whelmed its outward circumstances in ruin and catastrophe; and refusing to be embarrassed by its cruel exposure to the pitiless rain. A martyr on his melancholy journey to the stake, or a French Revolutionist resolved to show no weakness as the tumbril bore him to the guillotine, could not have displayed a sterner equanimity. I almost raised my hat to the old chair as the cart turned the corner and it passed for ever from my sight. It has gone now, to start life all over again under new and strange conditions; and I am left with its sad and vivid portrait in my mind and with the thoughts that it whispered to me as it passed.

I was talking last night to Donaldson about his dogs. He firmly expects to meet Bruce, Cæsar, Duke, Grim, and other of his favorites, in heaven. I asked him why he thought so.

'Oh,' he replied, 'I just feel it! Argument from consciousness, you know! Nothing would persuade me that old Nugget there is merely flesh and blood. I just *feel* that he has a soul, that's all!'

Now, singularly enough, I have just the same kind of feeling in reference to the old arm chair. If Donaldson cannot persuade himself that Nugget is merely flesh and blood, he certainly cannot persuade me that the old arm chair is merely leather and oak. Why, the chair all but spoke to me as it passed! There is something extremely soulful about furniture. I have been six-and-twenty years in the ministry, and have moved twice—each time to cross the sea. Can I ever forget the anguish of those auctions? I did not, of course, actually see them. If Nugget had to be shot, Donaldson would not stand by and watch the execution. But, when the fatal hour arrived, he would be able to think of nothing else. In his fancy he would witness the tragedy enacted fifty times over. So it was while those horrid sales were in progress. I took good care to be far away, out of sight and sound of it all. And yet the thought of it! The chair in which I had spent hundreds of delightful hours! The one opposite, dedicated, as by some sacred ordinance, to the mistress of my manse! Those in which our friends had sat and talked and smoked and laughed! The table round which we had all sat so happily and so often! My desk, too; and a score of other things! And to think of the one going off on a carrier's cart this way, and the other on another cart that way, never to see me or mine or each other again! It was a sort of sacrilege, a kind of blasphemy! I half wished that I had had the courage

to take them out into the field near by and waft their souls skyward in wreathing smoke and leaping flame! I had sold them for filthy lucre. I felt ashamed of myself; it seemed an act of desecration to pocket the money.

It pleases me to reflect that Sir Walter Scott felt similarly. Lovers of *Guy Mannering* will recall the auction at Ellangowan and its tragic sequel. 'Mannering entered among others, some to select articles for purchase, others to gratify their curiosity. There is something melancholy in such a scene, even under the most favorable circumstances. The confused state of the furniture, displaced for the convenience of being easily viewed and carried off by the purchasers, is disagreeable to the eye. Those articles which, properly and decently arranged, look creditable and handsome, have then a paltry and wretched appearance. It is disgusting, too, to see the scenes of domestic seclusion thrown open to the gaze of the curious and the vulgar, and to hear their coarse speculations and brutal jests upon the fashions and furniture to which they were unaccustomed.' And the Laird of Ellangowan, where was he? He was not present. And yet, was he not? Was Donaldson not present when Nugget was shot? Was I not present at those hideous sales at Mosgiel and Hobart? There are times when you cannot absent yourself by the cheap expedient of transporting your body. Donaldson *was* present when Nugget was shot! I *was* present at those

wretched sales! The Laird of Ellangowan *was* present that day, although no man saw him. And the result? 'When it was all over, he sunk into his chair and expired without a struggle or a groan. So little alteration did the extinction of the vital spark make upon his external appearance that the screams of his daughter, when she saw his eye fixed and felt his pulse stop, first announced his death to the spectators.'

If a man says that a dog consists of flesh and blood and such-like things, I shall simply refer him to Donaldson, and they can settle their quarrel between themselves. But if a man says that an arm chair consists of leather and oak and such-like things, I shall have great difficulty in avoiding controversy. I shall recall the nightmare of those auction sales; I shall think of the old arm chair I saw on the cart this afternoon. But, happily, I need say nothing about all that. I shall simply point to the dead body of the Laird of Ellangowan. Was it the parting with leather and oak that killed him? Of course not! Why, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes has pointed out that you cannot enter the craziest old garret, after its unhappy occupant has been carried away to a pauper's grave, without feeling that every stick of furniture has a ghost, a soul, or whatever you care to call it. For the garret, he says, is like a seashore, where wrecks are thrown up and slowly go to pieces. There is the cradle in which the old man was rocked; there is the ruin of the bed-

stead on which he died; that ugly slanting contrivance used to be put under his pillow in the days when his breath came hard; there is his old chair with both arms gone, symbol of the desolate time when he had nothing earthly left on which to lean. And so on, and so on. The whole place is haunted. Every stick is more than a stick. And indeed, to tell the whole truth, the stick itself is the least important part of the stick. And of that be true of these paltry things in the attic, what of my old arm chair?

I wish I could get Dean Burgon's opinion on the matter. Those of us who have read the Dean's *Life* will always remember his description of his mother's gradual decline. 'In old times,' he says, 'the driving up of my cab to the door was the signal for her I loved hastily to descend the stairs. She used to meet me almost at the door in the hall, exclaiming "Welcome! welcome!" and, with her dear kind arms extended, embracing me and kissing me heartily on the cheek three or four times. Presently, it used to be on the stairs that I saw her outstretched arms and received her warm embrace. By degrees it seemed to me as if she descended a smaller and smaller number of stairs. Latterly it was at the door of her own room that I felt her hearty and repeated kiss, and heard her emphatic "Welcome, my boy! My poor boy!" and so on. What a warm embrace it used to be! She would open her dear arms wide and then enfold me. But she could not quite do this at the last, or, at least, not in quite the

same way. I believe the last time but one I came home she only rose from her chair. The last time of all I embraced her, on arriving home, *as she sat in her chair!'* The soul of the arm chair becomes more and more knit to our own souls as the long and shadowy days creep on. Would Dean Burgon, with such memories, deny that the old arm chair is a singularly soulful affair?

Everybody who met the old arm chair on the carrier's cart this afternoon must have felt as I did that the oak and the leather, and such internal and external trappings, were the least important parts of it. It was the unconquerable soul of the old chair that evoked my homage and compelled my admiration. Compared with *that,* the fact that the soul of the chair was tricked out in leather and oak was a mere circumstance. The chair was haunted; you could see that at a glance. What tales it could have told! From the day—so long ago that no man now living can remember it—when it was first purchased by a shy and bashful pair who were dreaming dreams that were not half so wonderful or rainbow-tinted as the events that more than fulfilled them, down to the hour—only this afternoon—when it fell to the tap of an auctioneer's hammer, the whole history of the chair has been one long romance. If, I say, this old arm chair has not a soul, who has?

If, in support of my contention that an arm chair is more than an arm chair, I were only allowed to call one witness, I think I should call Jacques Jas-

min, the Gascon poet. Those who have read Dr. Samuel Smiles' *Life of Jasmin* will remember that the poet was wretchedly poor. When first the muse came upon him he was a barber's boy, and he scribbled his effusions on the ladies' curl papers. After awhile the barber was astonished at the amazing increase in the volume of his custom, and he found it difficult to realize that the curl papers were the attraction. The ladies, in their turn, found it difficult to believe that the charming verses were penned by the urchin whom they saw tidying up the shop. But, once the discovery was made, Jasmin was the darling of all hearts, and he found a stream of silver pouring into his pockets. Now it happened that, as far back as could be traced, Jasmin's ancestors had died in the poorhouse. There, in the corner of the squalid little room, was an old arm chair. In that arm chair Jasmin's great-grandfather and his grandfather had been carried off to the workhouse. It was one of the family traditions; it saved funeral expenses; and Jasmin was brought up to believe that, some day, in that selfsame chair, he himself would be borne away to a pauper's death bed. One afternoon, when the ladies who had visited the barber's shop had been more than usually liberal, it flashed upon Jacques Jasmin that he was endowed with a gift that placed him beyond the clutch of poverty. And that afternoon he went home, seized an axe, and smashed the arm chair to splinters! To the end of his days Jacques Jasmin regarded that as

the great moment of his life. And why? Simply because the arm chair stood for something; and, in smashing the arm chair, he had broken so much more than the arm chair.

But now comes the real problem. If the arm chair has a soul, how did it come by it? Who imparted to the arm chair the power to make me feel that it is so much more than oak and leather? It is all a matter of overflow. To begin with, in designing and carving and constructing the chair, the maker of the chair poured part of his own soul into it. It took so much of his life; and, to that extent, he gave his life to the chair. What is it that Muriel Stuart sings about the furniture in her dining-room?

When I sit down to read at night
I hear a thousand voices call—
The painted cups, the mirror bright,
The crazy pattern on the wall.

The curtains, whispering that they were
Plucked from the bosom of the lea,
The coal that knew the Flood, the chair
Remembering when it was a tree.

They told of those who beat and broke,
Blasted and burned their lives away,
And with them other voices spoke,
And spoke more dreadfully than they.

Terrible sounds of woe and strife
Made thunder in this quiet room—
Women who gave the mill their life,
And men who shuddered at the loom.

The noise the snarling hammer made
  In maddened ears, the foundry's roar,
The hands that stitched the rich brocade,
  That beat the brass, that hewed the door.

How can I read while round me swarm
  Creatures that strove and wept and died
To make this room rich, safe, and warm,
  To keep the weather-beasts outside?

How can I rest, while in the gloom,
  From mine and garret, den and pit,
They pass who built in blood this room,
  And with their tears have furnished it!

But there is more in it than this; far more. Let me ask a pertinent question or two. This has been a very one-sided study. It has concerned itself almost exclusively with *my* view of the old arm chair. But what does the old arm chair think of *me?* The arm chair seems to me to be so much more than leather and oak. Do I seem to the arm chair to be ever so much more than flesh and blood? I catch myself thinking about the soul of the arm chair. Does the arm chair catch itself thinking about the soul of *me?* And, if not, why not? And now the secret is out. I said that it was all a matter of overflow. The soul of the arm chair is my own soul overflowing into the chair. I remember a talk I once had with Manser, an old Tasmanian friend. He assured me one day that he was conscious of a soul in the mountain.

'Why,' he said, 'when I wake up in the morning,

I jump out of bed, draw up my blinds, look up at the mountain, and almost hear it speak to me! Its soul responds to mine!'

But supposing Manser were not there! Supposing nobody were there! Would the mountain still have a soul? Of course not! The soul that spoke to Manser was his own soul! It overflowed into the mountain and rushed back upon him again. It is all very well to say of 'The Lost Chord' that

> It came from the soul of the organ
> And entered into mine.

But the soul of the organ was the overflow of the maker's soul and the overflow of the player's soul; and, but for the maker and the player, the organ would have been the soul of soullessness.

And so it turns out that if we listen with sufficient care, the old arm chair is talking to us of *ourselves*. It is reminding us of the spiritual profundities and potentialities of our own wondrous nature. Man is not only spiritual himself; he is able to invest every stick of furniture and every grain of sand with spiritual significances and spiritual voices. To him his very arm chair is full of soul—the reflection and overflow of his superabundant soulfulness. The tragedy of a low life is that powers so obviously divine are either stultified and unrealized or else degraded to mean and ignoble ends. The soul of the old arm chair rises in stern and solemn protest

against the behavior of that man who, being a man, forgets the essential glory and spirituality of his own manhood. And, when the old arm chair speaks in *that* tone of voice, the old arm chair is well worth listening to.

VI

ALPS UPON THE BRAIN

'TELL me,' I heard the teacher demand, as I passed under the open windows of his classroom this afternoon, 'tell me, what range of mountains had Napoleon to cross in order to commence his campaign in the Peninsula?'

The replies were inaudible to me; but a few seconds later I was startled by the teacher's voice uplifted in tones of withering disdain.

'Alps!' he cried. *'The Alps, indeed!* Why, you must have *Alps upon the brain!'*

The expression struck me as being rather a fine one. *'Alps upon the brain!'* A mote in your eyes is a very troublesome companion, but a mountain in your mind adds a new relish to life. Every man should have an Alp or two tucked away among the convolutions of his brain. Every man! I know that it can be argued that some men need such massive cerebral furniture more than others. But all such contentions savor of special pleading and fail to convince me. Even our old friend the Autocrat of the Breakfast-table, in an unguarded moment, fell into this snare. He propounded a theory to the effect that a man should play at dominoes

with the universe. If he finds himself living in some pine-clad valley, surrounded on every side by towering pinnacles and snow-capped peaks, he should, according to the Autocrat, set himself to catch the spirit of his environment; he should cultivate a rugged and mountainous mind. If, on the other hand, his lot is cast on some low-lying lands that are washed every day by the salt sea waves, he should so drink in the temper of the outlook as to possess an ocean in his own soul. At each turn he should take some pains to match the piece that Nature plays to him. This, I repeat, strikes me as ingenious rather than convincing. I am generally of one mind with the Autocrat, and have often felt thankful for so surefooted a guide. But I confess that, just at this point, I cannot follow him. The Autocrat thinks that those who dwell among the ranges should cultivate minds of mountainous ruggedness and grandeur, and that those who live by the side of the sea should develop minds of oceanic breadth and fullness. Perhaps! But is there not something to be said from a quite opposite standpoint?

Is it not the man who makes his home where the level lands stretch monotonously away to the distant skyline who most needs to keep a few sky-piercing summits wrapped up in the grey matter of his brain? Vanbeest Brown, in *Guy Mannering,* used to say that, among the plains of the low countries, he found comfort in recalling the gloomy heights of his na-

tive land and in letting his fancy conjure up the music of some roaring mountain-torrent. He found life enriched by the mountains he carried in his mind. I have myself lived most of my life among the mountains, and never failed to appreciate their stately companionship; but the thought of them was never quite as pleasant to me as it is now that not a single scarped peak looks down upon me. And, contrariwise, is it not the man who makes his home in the innermost depths of some great continent who needs most of all to carry an ocean in his soul? An old friend of mine accepted an appointment that took him right away up into the dusty heart of this great Australian Commonwealth, nearly a thousand miles from ships and from railways, from city and from sea. He and his wife spent in my home their last evening before setting out for their lonely abode away in the Never-never country of the far interior. And I remember how he confessed to me with a laugh—a laugh that had in it a tremulous suspicion of tears—that he had that afternoon been down to the pier and filled a bottle with sea-water to take with him on his long inland journey.

'We shall not see the sea again for years,' he explained apologetically, 'and we thought that the smell of it, or, if needs be, the taste of it, would sometimes bring it back more vividly before us. We are taking some shells, too, to put to our ears when we wish to be reminded of the roar of the surf.'

It was just his way of carrying the ocean in his soul. He surely needed it as much as those who scarcely move out of sight of the sea! Dominoes is a very good game to play; but, when all is said and done, it is not the only game. And, in the circumstances, my friend and his life were playing a game that is just as fascinating as dominoes. It is good at times to match Nature's piece; it is good at other times to supplement and complete it.

My twelve years at Mosgiel—a community of Scottish people whose love for their native land had only been inflamed by long residence at the antipodes—taught me much. Among other things I learned that there is really only one point of difference between an Englishman and a Scot. It is this: a Scotsman always carries a few mountains in his mind. I love to hear a Scotsman pray. As soon as you close your eyes you are among the beetling crags and rugged ranges. A Scotsman appeals at once to all that is majestic, all that is terrible, all that is awe-inspiring in the divine character. As the prayer proceeds, you find yourself gazing up toward heights that make you tremble, and glancing down into chasms that compel a shudder. You are among the mountains all the time. An Englishman's prayer, be it never so fervent, is always an Englishman's prayer. It is undulating and graceful, a thing of gradual ascents and gentle declivities. It will wind this way and that way like a Kentish lane. It is English through and through. But once you

have lived among Scotsmen you will always in an Englishman's prayer miss the mountains. A Scotsman's prayer is always a granite boulder torn from some rocky hillside, redolent of brown heath and shaggy wood. An Englishman's prayer is always a slice of an English county, a thing of winding lanes and fragrant fields and shady village greens.

Compare, for example, the prayers of Chalmers with the prayers of Spurgeon. Or, if you prefer it, compare their sermons. Spurgeon is eloquent; but it is a quiet and homely eloquence. Like the English hills, it rarely becomes towering or magnificent; like the English valleys, it rarely becomes dark or fearsome. But Chalmers! Whether it is his biography or his works, you lay down the volume feeling that you have been making the grand tour of the ranges. The man himself—his massive head, his bulky form, his lofty brow, his chiselled face, his turgid and billowy rhetoric—is mountainous in every particular. Everything about Chalmers is virile, leonine, volcanic. His stormy yet stately eloquence swept over his audiences with the force of a hurricane. His gestures were often ungainly; his broad Fifeshire accent was so pronounced that his hearers sometimes felt that his voice was drowned in the thunder; and yet his tempestuous oratory bore down everything before it. Goldwin Smith complained that Emerson was a cataract of pebbles. Chalmers was exactly the reverse. Chalmers was a range of Alpine heights.

Or look at this! Here, in his neat and well-kept library, Macaulay bends over the manuscript of his *History of England,* looking as though he had just returned from a dinner at Holland House. Not many streets away Carlyle is working at his *Frederick the Great,* so smothered with dust that 'he looks, for all the world, like a miller who has fallen into his bins one after another in the process of grinding the meal for his daily bread.' Readers of the two men know that their styles differ as strikingly as do their personalities. Macaulay is not only English; he is England. Carlyle is not only Scottish; he is Scotland. He always has a few mountains in his mind. As Mr. Maclean Watt says in his monograph of Carlyle, 'The step of the moor-man, springing with the elasticity of the vibrant medium he treads, clings to him after years of city pavements. To the finish of his long years, the majority of which he passed in the heart of London, Carlyle retained the tang of that secluded district of Scotland in which his heart was formed; and though he was known to the world at large as the Sage of Chelsea, he was the man of Ecclefechan till he died.' You cannot read a single sentence of Carlyle without seeing the mountains. Whether he is discussing the excesses of Robespierre, the foibles of Voltaire, or the scribblings of the imaginary Teufelsdrockh, he is always and everywhere the man of the mountain. The strength of Carlyle is the strength of the eternal hills. The flow of his

eloquence is like the tumultuous tumble of a mountain torrent. Emerson may be all pebbles; Carlyle is all peaks.

I believe in the influence of the terrific. In whatever land a man happens to have been born, it is good for him to have a few big things in the background of his memory, a few Alps upon his brain. They may be sad things or glad things; it does not matter very much so long as they are big things. I am arguing neither for ranges that are clothed in soft green grasses and draped in lovely forestry, nor for bare and broken peaks on which no single blade will grow. I am arguing for mountains, be they beautiful or be they terrible. I have reached down from my shelves, almost at random, a few biographies. In almost every case I have discovered, in turning over the opening pages, the record of some impressive event that, captivating the imagination of childhood, shaped the whole of the life that followed.

Here, for instance, in the very first chapter of Lord Charnwood's *Abraham Lincoln,* I find this. Abraham is a boy, touring the Mississippi and visiting New Orleans. In that city he sees a slave auction. A beautiful young mulatto girl is brought out. The dealers pinch her and prod her as though she were a mere brute beast. They make her walk up and down to show off her points. Lincoln saw it. His heart bled. Then and there slavery thrust its iron into his soul. 'By God, boys,' he exclaimed to

his companions, 'let's get away from this! If ever I get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard!' Lincoln lived his whole life with that dark summit always standing out clearly against the horizon. It influenced every movement of his illustrious career.

In his *Reminiscences* Sir Henry Hawkins, afterwards Baron Brampton, tells of a similar episode of his own boyhood, one that affected his whole life. 'Standing at a window,' he says, 'I saw, emerging from a by-street that led from Bedford Jail, a common farm-cart, drawn by a horse which was led by a laboring man. As I was above it, I could see that there was a heap of straw in the bottom of the cart. I could see, too, from the pallid faces of the crowd, that there was something sad about it all. The horse moved at a snail's pace, while, behind, walked a poor sad couple with their heads bowed down, and each with a hand on the tailboard of the cart. They were evidently overwhelmed with grief. I learned a little later that the cart contained the body of their only son, a youth of seventeen, hanged that morning for setting fire to a stack of corn!' Sir Henry confesses that in the years that followed he scarcely ever pronounced a sentence without thinking of the spectacle he witnessed that day. It loomed up like some gloomy peak in the background of his memory.

And are there not huge phantom summits that tower up grandly against the horizon of the soul? Let us get back to Scotland for a moment, and Ian

Maclaren shall be our guide. We are at the Kirk Session at Drumtochty. Jessie, aspiring to be numbered among the young communicants, is before the elders, and is being examined. Burnbrae asks her a few questions, and is satisfied. Burnbrae was a big-hearted man, with a fatherly manner, and Jessie said that he treated her as if she were his ain bairn. But after Burnbrae came Lachlan Campbell. Lachlan stood for inflexible justice. He soon had poor Jessie on the rack.

'How old will you be?'

'Auchteen next Martinmas.'

'And why will you be coming to the Sacrament?'

'Ma mother thocht it was time,' with a threatening of tears, as she looked at the harsh face of Lachlan Campbell.

'Ye will, maybe, tell the Session what has been your law-work, and *how long ye haf been at Sinai.*'

'I dinna ken what yir askin',' replied Jessie, breaking down utterly. 'I was never out o' Drumtochty!' *Sinai!* Here was a mountain peak to so suddenly confront the astonished gaze of a young communicant! *Sinai,* the mount that burned with fire!

But Jessie need not have been ashamed or confounded beneath the old elder's cross-examination. One may have Alps upon the brain, and in the soul, without knowing very much about the darksome peak of which *he* spake. *'I lay long at Sinai,'* says John Bunyan in his introduction to *Grace Abound-*

ing; but it does not follow, because Lachlan Campbell and John Bunyan came that way, that Jessie and I must do the same. There are other mountains besides Mount Sinai. In her sketch of her mother, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe says that 'there was one passage of Scripture always associated with her in our childish minds. It was this *"For ye are not come* unto the mount that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest; *but ye are come* unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." We all knew,' Mrs. Stowe continues, 'that this was what our father repeated to her when she was dying, and we often repeated it to each other. It was to *that* we felt we must attain, though we scarcely knew how. In every scene of family joy or sorrow, or when father wished to make an appeal to our hearts that he knew we could not resist, he spoke of mother!'

If only Lachlan Campbell had spoken to poor, trembling Jessie of *this* snow-capped and shining summit! 'Not to Mount Sinai, the mount that burned with fire, but ye are come to Mount Zion!' Surely, *then,* Jessie would have understood!

'Mount Sinai!'—it only reminded Jessie of Mosaic terrors!

'Mount Zion!'—it reminded Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe of her mother's tenderness.

'I move,' said Burnbrae, as Jessie stood weeping and discomfited, 'I move, Moderator, that she get her token. Dinna greet, lassie, for ye've dune weel, and the Session's rael satisfied.' The motion was carried, and Jessie went away comforted.

I should like to have seen Jessie on the day of that first communion of hers. Ian Maclaren says nothing about it; but somehow, I fancy that the communion hymn on that never-to-be-forgotten Sabbath was Mrs. Alexander's:

> There is a green hill far away,
> Without a city wall,
> Where the dear Lord was crucified
> Who died to save us all.

And when she joined with wavering, tremulous voice in singing that lovely hymn, Jessie forgot all about Lachlan Campbell's uncomfortable questions. She felt—as we all feel—that, once the eyes have rested on *that* holy hill, no other mountain, however lofty, is worth worrying about.

PART III

I

MOSGIEL

Five and twenty years ago to-night I arrived at Mosgiel after my long, long voyage from the other side of the world. The little place must always be to me a riot of memory. I have sometimes wondered whether, during the twelve years that I spent there, I missed any strange experience that might conceivably have come my way. In looking back across the past at that first ministry of mine, it really seems to me that, from being summoned to attend a shuddering felon on the gallows to being commissioned by a too-bashful lover with the responsibility of proposing to a blushing maid on his behalf, I tasted every pain and pleasure, sounded every deep and shallow, of the ministerial life.

It would, of course, be easy to place on record a few of these adventures; but they would, I am afraid, furnish lugubrious reading. Those sturdy folk to whom I ministered were of the severely Scottish type; they took their pleasure sadly; but everything that verged upon the sombre side of life they dealt with in the grand and lofty style. There is humor in those early experiences, although at the time I failed to notice it, but the humor is

of the grim or gloomy kind. I had only been a few weeks in the place when I discovered that, on some subjects, these stern parishioners of mine had notions of their own. I was boarding in those days at an orchard about a mile from the township. A stranger in a strange land, very lonely and very homesick, I spent most of my time in preparing sermons and seeing visions. I put them in that order deliberately. I do not wish to imply that, between the dreams and the discourses, there existed any relationship at all. The prophets saw visions that led to their fiery proclamations; but I am neither a prophet nor the son of one, and my dreams did not help my discourses a scrap. The sermons, I have no doubt, were quite sublime; all youthful sermons are. But the dreams, at any rate, were exceedingly human. In William Morris's *King Arthur's Tomb*, the poet makes poor Guinevere confess that, when she went with her maids to sing mass in the chapel on the lawn, her visions were not helpful to her devotions.

> And every morn I scarce could pray at all,
> For Launcelot's red golden hair would play,
> Instead of sunlight, on the painted wall,
> Mingled with dreams of what the priest did say.

I can sympathize with her. My dreams were of pretty much the same kind. They were principally concerned with a very fine house and a very fair face. For, in those days, the Mosgiel manse was

projected but not yet built; and she, its prospective mistress, was still in England, wooed but not yet won. Once, however, at dead of night, these delicious dreams were rudely disturbed. I was awakened, and brought back to reality, by a sharp, vigorous tapping at my window and the insistent repetition of my name. As soon as I could regain command of my wayward and drowsy faculties I stammered out an answer to the mysterious voice, and proceeded to strike a match.

'You're wanted at once at a kisting at 11 Factory Row!' the voice replied.

By this time I had lit the candle, wrapt something round me, and thrown open the window. But there was no one there! Save for the night wind sighing through the fruit-trees, everything was as quiet as the grave. Could the voice have been a part of the dream? The theory did not seem feasible; the two things would not fit into each other at all. As I peered out into the silent night, the words came back to me.

'Wanted at once! A kisting! Factory Row!'

There was nothing for it, so I arose, dressed, and slipped out into the darkness. It was just two o'clock in the morning—an unearthly hour to be abroad. The whole adventure seemed uncanny. Every sound startled me. A cow that had been standing against the fence moved a few yards farther away; a horse lying in one of the paddocks suddenly rose and whinnied; a bird in the hedge

flapped its wings; a cat scurried across the road. All things appeared to resent my intrusion upon their nocturnal stillness. What was I doing out among the fields at that amazing hour? they all wanted to know. And that was precisely what I also wished to know. A kisting! Wanted at once at a kisting! What on earth was a kisting? I took the word to pieces, analyzed it, and examined it in the closest possible way, but to no purpose. What awaited me at 11 Factory Row, and what I was to do when I reached that address, I could not imagine. On his way to the house of feasting or the house of grief, a minister unconsciously attunes his spirit to the scene of gladness or the scene of sadness upon which he is about to burst, but such an exercise was impossible to me that night. My mind was in a tumult of uttermost bewilderment. I emerged from the fields upon the slumbering township, and, passing through the deserted streets, made my way to Factory Row. As I approached I could see that No. 11 was a scene of animation. A light shone from every window. The front door stood open, and, as I walked up the garden path, two or three familiar figures stepped out to meet me. I frankly confessed my perplexity, and they, good stalwart Scots, pitied my lowland ignorance and made things easy for me. A kist, they explained, is simply a chest, or, as we English would say, a coffin. Poor old Donald McCaig had died overnight; the undertaker had just brought the kist, and it was cus-

tomary for the minister 'to read a wee bittie from the buik and pit up a prayer' when the body was reverently lifted into it. I attended many a kisting after that, but I shall never forget my first experience of the kind. As I walked back through the fields half an hour later the stars were shining. They may have been watching over me all the time, but, on the outward journey, I was too confused and bewildered to notice them. As I made my way back to my bed—and my dreams—I found myself pondering on the strangeness and significance of my mission. Wherever, the wide world over, the living and the dead mingle, men seem by some sure instinct to feel that the minister of the Most High should stand, as Aaron stood, between them.

In regard to the disposition of their temporal affairs, my Mosgiel folk had ideas peculiarly their own. A kind of tradition obtained among them. The tradition consisted of two parts. In the first place they held strongly to the conviction that under no circumstances should a will be made as long as there was the faintest glimmer of hope of the recovery of the testator; and, in the second place, they firmly believed that nobody but the minister should draw up that solemn and awful instrument. These tenets in the faith of my good people proved at times extremely embarrassing, and I tried to reason them into a better mind, but they only smiled at the strange ideas of their young English minister, and pursued the even tenor of their way. Once, when

the provisions of the dying man were particularly intricate and complicated, my faith in my ability to accurately draft the will completely failed me. At my wits' end, and under deep emotion, I rose from my chair, expressed to the relatives my grief at my own incapacity, tore the unfinished document into fragments, and implored them to let me go for a solicitor. They were extremely vexed. In course of time they forgave me, but the memory always served as a reminder of my lowland limitations. Now that the years have passed, and my declaration is unlikely to lead to awkward consequences, I may confess that, more than once, I was called to make out the wills of people whose consciousness, as their guided hands scratched a cross upon the foolscap, was, to put it mildly, only partial. I shiver still when I think of a certain bitterly cold night—there was snow on the ground—on which I was dragged from my bed to make Dugald Hunter's will. It was during our first year at the manse. I dressed as quickly as I could, slipped pen, ink, and paper into a bag, and set out across the fields. As I drew near to the cottage a woman came out on tiptoe with finger warningly upraised. Mr. Hunter had taken a turn for the better—he was inclined to sleep—perhaps I would give a cry roon in the morning! In the morning, I learned with considerable satisfaction, Mr. Hunter was distinctly better, and the making of the will had therefore been indefinitely postponed!

The call to a condemned cell came from a prison a hundred miles away. I knew nothing of the horrid case but what I had seen in the newspapers, and it never occurred to me for an instant that I should be drawn into the vortex of its squalor. Returning one afternoon from a visit to a sick child at a distant farm, I found a letter in a large official envelope awaiting me. I tore it open curiously but casually. It was from the sheriff of the gaol. The wretched man lying under sentence of death had sought my help, and the authorities requested me to leave by the first train. The horror of it nearly froze my blood. I do not know how our first parents felt as they exchanged the garden for the wilderness, but I know how I felt as I turned my back upon the fields and farms around my quiet manse, and prepared to plunge into this realm of sordid guilt and hideous tragedy. Happily the sentence was, at the last moment, commuted, and I was spared the terrible ordeal that, since opening the sheriff's letter, had haunted my imagination night and day.

This, however, was not strictly a memory of Mosgiel. The case was not a Mosgiel case, the people were not Mosgiel people. The nearest approach to anything of this grim kind at Mosgiel occurred on Christmas Day. On Christmas Eve I heard that Jamie Duncan had been found dead in his room. Later in the evening I heard that the jury had pronounced it a case of *felo-de-se,* and that the

funeral was fixed for the afternoon of Christmas Day. In view of the terrible verdict, the relatives declined to follow the body to the grave, and the undertaker refused to lead the cortège through the main streets. On that glorious Christmas afternoon—the midsummer sunshine bathing all the hills in splendor—I alone followed that coffin through the secluded byways of the township to the cemetery on the side of the hill; and, when I read the burial service at the graveside, the undertaker and the sexton were my only hearers. I remember that, as I bade him good-bye, the undertaker was good enough to wish me a merry Christmas, and, somehow, the words sounded strange.

It was on Christmas Day, too, that Seth Draper intrusted me with his delicate commission. Seth was a great man every way. He was well over six feet in height and was broad and massive in proportion. He was a lonely man. For many years he had been the sole support of his aged mother and invalid sister. Seth was only a laborer; his earnings were not large; the sister involved him in doctors' bills and chemists' bills; and poor Seth felt that, with his hands so full, he must steel his heart against all thoughts of homemaking on his own account. He took no part in the social life of the church or the town, and most people thought him morose, reserved, and gloomy. He was most faithful, however, in his attendance at the week-night prayer meeting. One evening, acting upon a sudden im-

pulse, I asked him if he would lead us to the Throne of Grace. A moisture came to his eyes. Did I think him worthy of *that?* Nay, but he could not do it if he would. And then, after a pause, would I give him a week to think about it?

It was a wonderful prayer that Seth offered the following week. It seemed as though the very depths were broken up, and a brave, unselfish heart yielded its hidden treasure. Seth's great gift in this connection became notorious, and they were memorable prayer meetings in which he could be induced to take part. Seth's mother and sister passed away within a few weeks of each other. When I saw the door of his trim little cottage standing open of an evening, and learned that Seth was at home, I often sauntered across the fields for a chat. He was a skillful gardener, and liked to talk about his flowers. One summer evening, about the middle of December, I took the mistress of the manse with me on one of these informal calls. Pitying his loneliness, and seized by a sudden inspiration, she invited him to come across to the manse on Christmas Day and share our dinner with us. He seemed pleased, and readily agreed to come. But when the day arrived he appeared more taciturn than usual. He took little part in the conversation, and we were half sorry that we had brought to our board so dismal a guest. After dinner we lounged in deck-chairs on the veranda, enjoying the sunshine and strawberries and cream. And then, when the mistress of the

manse had withdrawn to attend to household matters, he found his tongue and startled me. Did I know Elsie Hammond? Of course I did! Elsie was one of the most devoted workers in the church. She had come to Mosgiel from an orphanage years before. She had lived a hard life in her younger days, and it had left its mark upon her. But she had been for years in service at the doctor's; they were very kind to her, and she had come to be regarded as an integral part of the establishment. Having no home of her own, she made a home of the church. Her whole heart was in it. Whenever something special needed to be done, we all turned instinctively to Elsie. Everybody loved her, and I believe that any of the girls in her class would have laid down their lives for her. Did I know Elsie? What a question! But why did he ask?

He told me. He was lonely. Since his mother and sister died, he had had nothing and no one to live for. And, somehow, he thought that Elsie was lonely, and he knew that she was good. He had never spoken to her, beyond mere formal words of greeting. He had never had anything to do with women-folk, and he didn't know how to start now. And, anyhow, in a little place like Mosgiel, it might look silly, and people would talk, and he would not for worlds make her uncomfortable.

I asked him if he had any reason to suppose that his admiration for Elsie was reciprocated.

'No,' he said sadly, 'none at all. One Sunday

afternoon, a month or two ago, I was coming up the road, and, looking over my shoulder, I saw Elsie coming a hundred yards or so behind me. She had another of the teachers with her. I had a scarlet nasturtium in my coat; I took it out and dropped it purposely. I glanced back to see if she picked it up; but she only kicked it into the grass by the side of the path.'

The case certainly did not look promising; but at his urgent request I undertook to see Elsie and sound her on the subject. For a day or two I felt very perturbed, and wondered how on earth I should approach the delicate theme. But my worry, like most worries, was quite superfluous. My task was made wonderfully simple. On the following Sunday—the last day of the old year—Elsie dropped in after church. It was a perfect summer evening, and, after laying her Bible, her handbag, and her gloves on the dining-room table, she and the mistress of the manse sauntered off into the garden to look at the roses. I was tired after a heavy day, and threw myself for a moment on the couch. Absentmindedly I reached out my hand and picked up Elsie's Bible. As I opened it, there fluttered from its pages *a pressed nasturtium!* I saw my chance.

The ladies returned; one went off to get the supper, and I was left alone with the other. I at once asked her to tell me about the nasturtium in her Bible. Her utter confusion told me all that I wished to know.

'Elsie,' I said, seeing that she was unlikely to speak, 'Seth Draper dropped that flower; you kicked it into the grass by the side of the road, and then went back afterward and picked it up and pressed it!'

She was amazed at discovering that I possessed the first half of the secret. To set her to her ease I had to tell her how the information came to me. I do not flatter myself that the attempt to put her at her ease was altogether a success. But, however that may be, Seth and Elsie were happily married a few months later. When I left Mosgiel they had quite a little family around them.

And so, sometimes telling of the love of man and sometimes telling of the love of God, I spent twelve happy years among these people but sturdy souls, learning at their hands to be a minister of the everlasting gospel.

II

THE MAGIC MIRROR

I

Mercy longed for the magic mirror. Nothing else would satisfy her. The stay of the pilgrims with the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains was drawing to its close. The shepherds were anxious that the pilgrims should carry with them some mementoes of their visit. But what were they to give them? Mercy looked longingly at the big glass in the dining-room, and confided to Christiana her secret.

'I am ashamed,' she said, 'that these men should know I longed for it!'

Christiana assured her that there was no need for shame.

'Then, mother, if you please, ask the Shepherds if they are willing to *sell* it!'

'Now the glass,' Bunyan explains, 'was one of a thousand. It would present a man one way with his own features exactly; and, turn it but another way, and it would show one the very face and similitude of the Prince of Pilgrims Himself. Yea, I have talked with them that have seen the very crown of thorns by looking in that glass; they

have also seen the holes in His hands, in His feet, and His side!'

I am not surprised that Mercy longed for it, nor do I wonder at her ecstasy when, with a joyful consent, the Shepherds presented her with the mirror that she so ardently coveted.

A glass that will show a man 'his own features exactly' is a glass worth having. I have never seen such a mirror in my life. All the looking-glasses into which I have gazed have insisted on twisting everything, confusing everything, reversing everything. If I have a cut on the right side of my face, the mirror shows me a man with a similar cut on the left side. I wear my buttonhole in the left-hand lapel of my coat, and my watch in the left-hand pocket of my waistcoat; the man in the mirror, however, wears his buttonhole in the right-hand lapel and his watch in the right-hand pocket. Everything is the wrong way round. That is why no man thinks his own photograph a good likeness. He has never seen himself as he really is; he has simply accustomed himself to the topsy-turvy image in the looking-glass. If the photograph had twisted everything, distorted it, and shown it the wrong way round, he would have said that it was an excellent portrait. Because the photograph has represented things as they really are, other people say it is an excellent portrait, but he himself can scarcely recognize it. It is the trickery of the mirror. Ordinary mirrors do not show a man his own features exactly,

and I can forgive Mercy for coveting the magic mirror that did.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table used to say that when John and Thomas indulge in conversation there are really six persons engaged in the discussion. There are three Johns:

1. The real John; known only to his Maker.
2. John's ideal John; never the real one, and often very unlike him.
3. Thomas's ideal John; never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either.

And facing these three Johns are the three Thomases. But neither of the three Johns has seen the real John; and neither of the three Thomases has seen the real Thomas. The real John and the real Thomas, the Autocrat says, are known only to their Maker. As for them, the mirrors have deceived them. But the magic mirror that Mercy coveted told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Such a mirror is a priceless piece of furniture. It is a good thing for a man to know himself, to see himself as he really is, to be shown 'his own features exactly.'

II

Long, long ago men spent a vast amount of time in attempting to see themselves. They tried all the mirrors obtainable. They indulged in the most exact processes of self-examination. They

spent hours and hours in careful introspection. They took themselves to pieces and submitted each separate part to the most remorseless scrutiny. Faith was constantly being overhauled. The progress of the soul was daily subjected to an infinite variety of tests. The inmost recesses of the heart were lighted up and severely searched. The religion of those days was a Religion of the Stethoscope; and the stethoscope is, in its own way, a most valuable instrument.

Up to a certain point, all this was very good. It was the tribute that our grandfathers paid to the inestimable value of the soul. They felt that if *it* prospered, all was well; if *it* declined, no other gain could compensate for its decay. They trembled lest, having found the pearl of greatest price, they should, through want of watchfulness, lose that unspeakable treasure. Like the miser who likes to peep at his shining hoard, they took every opportunity of assuring themselves that their precious possession was still there. Perhaps they overdid it. The stethoscope is, as I have confessed, a very useful instrument; but it is for occasional, rather than for constant, use. A man cannot profitably spend the whole of his time in sounding his own lungs, feeling his own pulse, and taking his own temperature. Our grandfathers did too much of this kind of thing. They came to resemble the children who plant their seeds one day and take them up the next to see if they are growing. The soul, like the

seed, needs a certain amount of obscurity and repose. Yet the behavior of the children at least betrays their anxiety about the seeds. And the behavior of our grandfathers at least betrayed their anxiety about their souls. It is possible that their excessive introspection manifested a needless nervousness; it is also possible that our scorn of introspection manifests a fatal indifference. It is rather a good thing to use the stethoscope now and again.

III

Carlyle belabored our poor grandfathers unmercifully because of this stethoscopic habit of theirs. He had no patience with the eyes that are for ever turned inward. 'Do you want a mirror in which to see yourself?' he asks. 'The only mirror that will accurately reflect thy spiritual lineaments is—the work that thou hast done!' And again, in *Past and Present,* he returns to the same theme. 'Know thyself!' he cries in disgust. 'Know thyself, indeed! Long enough has poor self of thine tormented thee. Thou wilt never get to know it, I believe! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual; know what thou canst work at; and work at it like a Hercules; That will be the better plan!' From the author of *Heroes and Hero-worship* we should have expected some such practical philosophy. All that the sage so sternly says is indisputably true. Yet we

cannot allow even Carlyle to forget that some of the men whose penchant for introspection was most marked were among the most prodigious toilers that the world has ever seen.

IV

Still, the fact remains that they overdid it. And they knew that they overdid it. Take Richard Baxter, for example. Richard Baxter is a past-master in the art of self-examination. No man can read Baxter's books without finding all the secrets of his soul laid bare. It is like taking a lantern and flashing its light into the cracks and crevices that have been undisturbed for years. He searches the soul until the soul cries out for mercy. But, in his later years, Baxter recognized that he had relied too much on the stethoscope. He had spent too much time in front of that side of the magic mirror that shows a man 'his own features exactly.' Writing toward the close of his life, he makes a significant and instructive confession. 'I was once,' he says, 'wont to meditate most on my own heart, and to dwell all at home, and look little higher; I was always poring either on my sins or wants, or examining my sincerity; but now, though I am greatly convinced of the need of heart-acquaintance and employment, yet I see more need of a higher work; and that I should look oftener upon Christ, and God, and heaven, than upon my own heart. At home I can find many distempers to

trouble me, and some evidences of my peace, but it is above that I must find matter of delight and joy and love and peace itself. Therefore, I would have one thought at home upon myself and sins, and many thoughts above upon the high and amiable and beautifying things.' One thought within; many thoughts above! One look at my sin; many looks at my Saviour!

V

A man may look within himself, but he does not find himself by looking within. He much more often finds himself by looking away. The story of Diehl, the artist, comes to mind. During his childhood his mother was greatly troubled about him. He was evidently a prodigy; he was always talking about his artistic feelings and his artistic tastes. Occasionally, but only occasionally, he set to work. Sir Frederick Leighton was consulted, and soon saw how the land lay. He invited the boy to his studio to inspect his own paintings and to tell which of them pleased him most. 'I like these figure sketches,' the lad replied; 'but why do you hang those landscapes? I do not think they are worth much!' Sir Frederick took the criticism patiently. He saw that the boy had been thinking too much of the artist *within* and too little of the beauty *without*. 'By hook or by crook,' he said to Mrs. Diehl, 'send him to Italy! Let him see snow-capped mountains and pine-clad valleys; let him see

the isles of the Adriatic and the waterways of Venice; let him catch the beauty and romance of other times and other climes!' The parents accepted the advice; the boy went abroad; he forgot the artist *within* him in contemplating the grandeur *around* him; and, on his return, he, still only seventeen, sent pictures which adorned the Royal Academy. It is good to look out—and around—and away. We find ourselves by looking away from ourselves.

The happy Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains possessed no stethoscope; had, indeed, never heard of such a thing! But they kept a telescope; a perspective-glass, as they called it. There is no record that their Christiana or Mercy looked through it. I have sometimes wondered why, in the story of the pilgrimage of the *men,* the interest at the Delectable Mountains centers round a perspective-glass, while, in the pilgrimage of the *women,* it is made to center round a looking-glass! But Bunyan must expound that subtle imagery for himself; it is too deep for me. It is enough for me that, in the record of the earlier pilgrimage, we are expressly told that Christian and Hopeful looked through the telescope and, by its help, saw in the distance the gates of the Celestial City and caught a momentary glimpse of the glory of the place.

Reading between the lines, I have come to the conclusion that the Shepherds made comparatively little use of that side of the magic mirror by which

a man could be shown 'his own features exactly.' But I understand the record to imply that they spent a good deal of their time in peering into that part of the glass in which it was possible to see the very face and similitude of the Prince of the Pilgrims Himself. Concerning the first function of the glass, no particulars are given; the matter is simply stated and left; the Shepherds evidently attached small importance to it. But concerning the power that the glass possessed of revealing the face and similitude of the Prince of the Pilgrims, the most luminous details are added. By peering into that side of the magic mirror the Shepherds could see His crown of thorns, His hands, His feet, His side. They could see Him living or dying; on earth or in heaven; in His humiliation or in His exaltation; whether coming to suffer or coming to reign. This full and glowing account of all that was to be seen in *that* side of the mirror, as compared with the bald statement of the powers possessed by the other side, convinces me that, for one look in the side that showed a man 'his own features exactly,' the Shepherds took many long looks into the side in which they could see the face and similitude of the Prince of the Pilgrims Himself.

'One look within, then many looks away!' says Richard Baxter, speaking out of his richer and riper experience.

'One look in the one side of the mirror, then many looks in the other!' say the Shepherds.

'I see,' says Dr. Andrew Bonar, in his diary, 'I see that when I dwell any length of time upon myself, my heart is not profited; but whenever I get a sight of Christ's love, my heart is full of life!'

'I find,' says John Wesley, writing in his *Journal* three days after his conversion, 'I find that all my strength lies in keeping my eyes fixed upon Jesus!'

Valuable as is the stethoscope, the telescope is more valuable still.

VI

'Wherefore,' says one of those inspired instructors in whose presence we always bare our heads, 'wherefore let us lay aside everything that encumbers and everything that entangles, and let us look off and away! Let us *look off and away unto Jesus!*' That great word would have been very much to the taste of the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains.

III

A FLUTTER OF PINK

Poor Essie! I felt sorry for her. It was a Sunday —one of those perfect Sundays that sometimes come to us just as spring is ripening into summer. Essie was wearing her new frock—a flutter of delicate pink—for the first time, and she was paying the inevitable penalty. They were sitting at tea on the open veranda enjoying, with their meal, the broad expanse of lawn and garden.

'I saw you glancing down at it in church this morning,' declared one brother, as he passed her the strawberries. 'I saw you, and I knew that *your* thoughts were not on the sermon!'

'Yes,' broke in another, 'and I know why you enjoyed your walk through the park so much this afternoon. It was not the trees, nor the flowers, nor the lake, nor the swans. You liked showing off your new dress! I know, miss!'

Poor Essie! In the brave days of old, gallant knights laid their shining swords at the feet of lovely ladies in distress, and dedicated their prowess to the relief of those beautiful victims. I can boast of membership in no ancient order of chivalry, and I possess no sword. But I have heard it argued at debating societies that the pen is even mightier.

If Essie will accept this pen of mine—the only weapon with which I can champion her cause—I shall be proud to place it at the service of so fair a mistress. For nobody will deny that Essie is herself most exquisitely charming; her new frock is a particularly dainty and becoming one; and who can blame her for being conscious of a new joy in life at finding herself so prettily arrayed? As she walked through the park that Sunday afternoon she must have noticed that she was not alone in respect of her new attire. Even the elms, the oaks, and the poplars seemed proudly happy at finding themselves clad in all the bravery of the new season's foliage. And certainly the birds were delighting in their soft fresh feathers. Even Essie's canary sings with a blither note when its new dress is complete. And if, in spite of her younger brother's cruel allegation, Essie's thoughts *were* on the service which she attended that Sunday morning, she must have noticed that the minister read and commented upon the one hundred and third Psalm. And when he came to the somewhat obscure reference to the renewal of the eagle's youth, he pointed out that the queenly bird feels a wild, delirious ecstasy when, the nesting-time and the moulting-time both over, she leaves at last the gloomy seclusion of the crags, and soars into the sunlight in all the regal splendor of her glorious golden plumage. Let Essie be comforted! As she exults in the beauties of her pretty pink frock she is in tune with the infinite.

One of these days the literary world will be startled by a notable and epoch-making sensation. There will arise a poet of such clear vision and such deep insight that he will perceive the historical, ethical, and spiritual significance of drapery; and then, depend upon it, we shall be presented with an epic masterpiece of such tender pathos and such tragic splendor as we have not met for many and many a day.

For this matter of dress is bound up with the deep, essential drama of our mortal life. Essie's pink frock is a part of her—as much a part of her as her pony's hide is part of him, and her kitten's fur is part of it. The fact that she can put it on and take it off at will only proves that she is a creature of loftier powers and ampler prerogatives than the pony and the kitten. Essie's dress is part of her, as the foliage is part of the elm and the plumage part of the eagle. It is wonderful how, in more senses than one, a dress grows to the wearer. It does so in a *material* sense; the dress settles down to the figure, and clings to it after a little wear as it cannot possibly do when new. And it does it in a *mental* sense. I have seen a mother, in putting the children's things away at night, smile at her boy's cap; it is so difficult to look at it without seeming to look into the roguish face and laughing eyes that she so often sees beneath it. I have often received a shock on seeing a hat hanging in a hall. My friend's hat seems so much a part of my

friend that I feel, on seeing it on the peg there, pretty much as the Aztec Indians must have felt when the Spaniards dismounted and the red men thought that the strange double-headed animals had come to pieces.

In *The Vicar's Daughter* Dr. George Macdonald emphasizes another phase of the same phenomenon. He describes the frantic alarm of Mr. and Mrs. Percivale when their little daughter was stolen by the gipsies. At the critical moment a kindly bricklayer comes to their help and offers to go after the caravan.

'Tell us what she's like, sir, and how she was dressed,' he says. And then he adds, as an afterthought, 'though that ain't much use. She'll be all different by this time.'

'The words,' says Mrs. Percivale, who is telling the story, 'the words shot a keener pang to my heart than it had yet felt. To think of my darling stripped of her nice clothes and covered with dirty, perhaps infected, garments!'

This is very significant. In the soul of Mrs. Percivale, it will be observed, the real moment of separation, the crucial moment, the moment in which little Ethel was torn from her, was the moment in which the child's clothes were changed; So much are our dresses a part of ourselves!

I will go further! Not only is a woman's dress a part of her; it is a most vital part. I have heard a good deal said concerning the eloquence of a

woman's tongue; but, however that may be, the eloquence of a woman's tongue is a negligible quantity as compared with the eloquence of her attire. With her tongue she speaks to a select few; but, by means of her dress, she daily holds forth to the multitude. Every woman is a public speaker. She may studiously avoid the pulpit and the platform; yet by means of her coats and her costumes she is compelled to address the public every day of her life. A woman's raiment is a woman's rhetoric. To all who see her, she speaks; and she speaks on two distinct sets of subjects. To begin with, she speaks of her social position and financial resources. Some women, by means of their dresses, whisper about these things, others scream about them; but whether they whisper or scream, they all speak. Then passing from the material to the metaphysical, a woman goes on to tell you, by means of her dress, of her artistic judgment and æsthetic tastes. When she turns to these matters, she invariably speaks the truth; on the more material themes she is not to be quite so implicitly trusted. By dressing poorly she may tell the world that she is poor, whereas her balance at the bank would reveal a very different story. Or, by dressing extravagantly, she may assure the people on the street of her wealth, while, as a matter of fact, her tradesmen's bills are all unpaid. By her hat, her coat, her costume, she is talking all the time. She may speak elegantly or

shockingly, truly or falsely, but at every step she speaks.

For this reason a woman cannot dress as she likes. I cannot speak as I like. My power of utterance involves me in the obligation to speak the truth. A woman's ability to speak by means of her dress places her under a similar necessity. If I meet a lady dressed in deep black, I take it for granted that she is in sorrow, and I extend to her the homage of my silent sympathy. If I meet a girl dressed in bridal array, I assume that she is happy, and I secretly share her gladness. It would shock my faith in womankind if I were to discover that these ladies merely wore their respective dresses of black and of white because they considered them becoming. I expect my lady friends to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

A wealth of ethical and even spiritual significance may underlie this matter of dress. I remember once chatting with an eminent evangelist, and cannot shake from my mind a terrible story that he told me. 'I was conducting an after-meeting,' he said. 'I had invited testimonies, and several had been given. During the singing of a hymn, I moved up and down the aisles among the people. I came upon a weary-looking little woman, with wan, pinched face. She was dressed in black. Her book was closed, she was not joining in the hymn, and I saw her wipe a tear from her eyes. Assuming that her sorrow stood related either to her somber

attire or to the service that I had just conducted, I approached and asked if I could help her. She told me that it was not in my power. "But you are crying!" I said. She paused for a moment, and then a look, almost of fierceness mingled with her tears. "Sir," she said, "I have four little children at home, I have nothing in the cupboard to give them, and *three of the women who testified just now owe me money.*"' Did I not say that the epic poem that will some day be written on this subject, would have a tragic grandeur all its own?

Nor should it lack dramatic power. If, as Essie attires herself in her dainty boudoir, all the creatures that have laid down their lives for her adornment could suddenly appear beneath her window, she would fancy that the house had suddenly been transported by magic to the Zoological Gardens. In order that she may revel in the beauty of tusk and fur and plume, of kid and shell and hide, all these dumb things have gone unmurmuringly to the shambles. For her beauty and comfort they have all been sacrificed. Essie will feel, as she looks down into their meek and upturned eyes, that there is something positively sacramental about the things she wears. And if—her brother's accusation notwithstanding—her thoughts *were* on the sermon, and if the sermon was what a sermon should be, I fancy that some of its most vital truths will recur to her mind as this aspect of her adornment so startlingly presents itself.

I suspect that Essie has some inkling of all this. Like most young people, she is more thoughtful than she seems. She must have noticed, with those blue eyes of hers, that life is all a matter of drapery. If it be true, on the one hand, that dress is but the eloquence of the body, it is no less true, on the other hand, that language is but the drapery of the mind. Thought clothes itself in speech. If Essie's graceful form is worthy of a dainty gown, then Essie's bright ideas are no less worthy of expressions that will set them off to advantage. If a figure on the street strikes us as ungainly, we ascribe the deformity to the wearer rather than to the apparel. And following the same line of argument, if a speaker is slipshod in his use of words, we are justified in concluding that the mind of that speaker is indolent and untidy.

It may even have occurred to Essie, wise little woman as she is, that, just as language is the clothing of the mind, so the body is the drapery of the soul. Just as my clothes adapt themselves to my figure, and grow to its shape, so the body adapts itself to the soul that it conceals. Even the face becomes harsh or gentle, sweet or sour, according to the disposition of the spirit beneath it. 'Wherefore,' said Socrates, 'let that man be of good cheer who has arrayed the soul in her proper jewels and adorned her with temperance, justice, courage, nobility, and truth. Thus attired, she is ready to go on her journey whenever her hour may come.'

Of all this, I say, Essie has, I think, some inkling. I cannot say for certain whether or not her mind was on the sermon. But I know that she sang with all her heart, the closing hymn:

> O great Absolver, grant my soul may wear
> The lowliest garb of penitence and prayer,
> That in the Father's courts my glorious dress
> May be the garment of Thy righteousness.

And as she sang those words, her whole mind, I could see, was concentrated upon her dress—*but not the pink one.*

IV

THE DRAPER

When I wrote on 'A Flutter of Pink' I really supposed that I had finished with that subject for ever. I had, I thought, said all that could profitably be said on the matter of dress, and I fancied that neither I nor any other scribbler would ever need to return to that fascinating theme. After the fashion of Mr. Podsnap, I had, I imagined, settled the question for all time, and waved it off the face of the planet. But, like Miss Mellicar's cat that, most methodically drowned and most carefully buried, came purring round that excellent lady's feet a quarter of an hour afterward, the problem of which I so satisfactorily disposed a few days ago, starts up in a new form and stares me once more in the face. The postman has brought me a letter from Chum Andrews. Chum was a mere boy when I saw him last. I was often a guest at his home in those days, and he and I understood each other very well. Chum was the pride of our cricket club—a rapid scorer, and a dangerous slow bowler—and was one of the most popular boys I knew. He always told me that he intended to be a farmer, and I encouraged his aspiration. But things have not shaped in accordance with his dream. He has been offered a position in a

well-known drapery establishment in Tasmania, and his father has persuaded him to accept it. Chum saw that the attractions of city life are not to be despised, and wrote the fateful letter with a light heart. But as the day approaches on which he is to inaugurate his new career, his doubts multiply. 'I wish,' he says, 'I had stuck to my guns. It looks as if I shall have to spend my life in ministering to other people's vanity.' Poor Chum! I, too, wish that it had been possible for him to realize his ideal. Our vast Australian solitudes are crying loudly for sturdy lads like him. But since the die is cast and it is irrevocably determined that he is to be a draper, I must endeavor to convince him that he has allowed his disappointment to thrust into undue prominence, the least attractive aspect of his new profession.

It is a great shame. From the days of the Stone Age, when men and women clothed themselves in the skins of the beasts that they slew, down to this twentieth century of ours with all its wondrous modes and fashions, it has been the sinister habit of writers to emphasize only the prosaic and sordid aspects of the drapery business. It must be confessed that, of this unhappy state of things, the draper himself has been largely to blame. Surely some glimmering suspicion of the sublimity of his calling must have floated across the fancy of some thoughtful draper at some time or other. If so, he never took the world into his confidence. Take Mr. H. G. Wells. Mr. Wells spent his early days

as an assistant in a draper's shop; and he has been ridiculing and denouncing the business ever since. 'For a couple of years,' he tells us, 'I slept in one of those abominable dormitories, ate the insufficient food supplied, and drudged in the shop. Then when I was fifteen, I ran away one Sunday morning to my mother, and told her I would rather die than be a draper. Perhaps,' Mr. Wells adds a little caustically, 'perhaps, but for that revolt, I might now be the proprietor of a little business over the door of which would be inscribed: H. G. Wells, Cash Draper.' In several of his novels, Mr. Wells has a kick at the profession that he so cordially loathes. Certainly, no susceptible youth with any poetry in his soul would be likely to court a life in the drapery trade after reading 'Kipps.' But before that susceptible youth turns in disgust from the draper's door, let him go into the matter more thoroughly. Or better still, let him talk it over with Chum Andrews. Let them notice how a girl's whole soul is stirred by the rapturous experience which her new dress brings to her; and they will feel that there is some romance in ribbons after all.

The Poet of the Breakfast-table had a vague consciousness that there is a more profound significance in drapery than appears on the surface. Like everybody else, he pokes fun at the draper. He laughs at that electrical briskness of movement, such as one may see in a squirrel, which characterizes the drapery salesman wherever you find him. His life

behind the counter is, he says, a succession of sudden, snappy perceptions and co-ordinated spasms. Somebody asks for six yards of purple calico, three yards wide. 'Up goes the arm, bang! tumbles out the flat roll, and turns half a dozen somersaults, as if for the fun of the thing; the six yards of calico hurry over the measuring nails, hunching their backs up like six canker-worms; out jump the scissors, snip, clip, rip, the stuff is whisked up, brown-papered, tied, labelled, delivered, and the man is himself again, like a child just come out of a convulsion fit. Think of a man's having some hundreds of these semi-epileptic seizures every day, and you need not wonder that he does not say much, these fits take the talk all out of him.' And yet for all this, the Poet of the Breakfast-table fancies there is something still concealed. 'Perhaps,' he adds uneasily, 'perhaps he has an inner life, with its own deep emotional and lofty contemplative elements!' Perhaps! You never know! We must go into the matter.

I am aware that I am plunging into a realm of mystery. We must try to understand the joyous sensations with which a girl wears a pretty frock for the first time, but it is not easy. It is especially difficult for a man. A man in a new suit is always in distress. He feels awkward and uncomfortable. He is not so much self-conscious as suit-conscious. He heaves a sigh of relief when the newness has departed, and he can wear the clothes without thinking

about them. But a woman knows no such embarrassment. She revels in the newness of her pretty frock, and will be sorry when its novelty has vanished. And I am not at all sure that, in this respect, the feminine feeling is not more commendable than the masculine.

In his *Life of Sir George Burns* Mr. Edwin Hodder describes a number of Sir George's intimate friends. Among them he refers to that well-known but somewhat eccentric banker, Robert Carrick—familiarly called Robin by his companions. Mr. Carrick, despite his great wealth, could never be persuaded to dress as became a respected citizen and a man of great authority. One day a very intimate friend plucked up courage to remonstrate with him. They were walking along the main street of the Scottish city in which they dwelt. 'Mr. Carrick,' reasoned his companion, 'don't you think it would be well if you exchanged this suit for a new one? It is positively green with age. You must remember that you are a man of great importance in the town.' But Robin only laughed. 'My dear sir,' he exclaimed, '*everybody* here knows me, it doesn't matter what I wear!' Some months later the two met in London, and Robin was as shabby as ever. 'Now this is too bad,' his critic expostulated; 'you told me that you only wore these clothes because everybody at home knew you; and here you are in London wearing them still!' But Robin laughed again, 'My dear sir,' he exclaimed,

'*nobody* here knows me; it doesn't matter what I wear!'

Now there is your masculine sentiment. In the case of Robin Carrick it is carried to extremes, of course, but for our present purpose it is all the better on that account. A thing may often be examined more satisfactorily when magnified under a microscope. Robin Carrick represents the masculine indifference to drapery. Most men feel as he felt even though, out of self-interest or self-respect, they do not act as he acted. But it is almost impossible to conceive of a woman feeling in the same way.

A woman—perhaps as a protest against our masculine carelessness in such matters—goes to the opposite extreme. 'Women,' as Mr. A. C. Benson points out in one of his essays, 'women have a sense of the importance, and even the sacredness, of dress of which a masculine mind can form no idea. One sees women gazing into shops where costumes are displayed with a rapt and intent vision, in a joyful dream, which one does not see displayed by men before a tailor's window.' From the dawn of civilization the sterner sex has been in the habit of twitting the gentler one with its frailty in this respect; but if they had the creation of a new social order, would many men wish things to be otherwise than they are? Essie—the heroine of my 'Flutter of Pink'—was unmercifully teased by her brothers at the tea-table; yet no one was more proud of her bewitching appearance than were they. It is the

way of the sex. In his blunt fashion a man may tell a woman that her delight in a dainty gown is an indication of frivolity, of a shallow mind, and of a want of seriousness; but in his heart of hearts he knows that it is her intuitive realization of her mission in life that leads to her fondness for beautiful attire. A controversy raged some time ago in an English magazine, in the course of which one contestant argued that women dress as they do in order to attract the attention of men; the other maintained that their only object is to outshine each other. In the one case, it will be observed, the motive is altogether *sexual;* in the other it is altogether *savage!* But let us be charitable, let us be fair. Let us, I say again, try to understand Essie. Is it not possible for a woman to dress prettily for the pure sake of looking pretty and without any ulterior motive at all? Woman is the artist of the universe. The beauties of the world—the petals of the flowers, the plumage of the birds, the loveliness of the landscape, the glitter of the stars—appeal more directly and effectively to a woman than to a man. She feels instinctively that she is part of a gigantic color-scheme. A man is content to stand aside from this riot of luxuriance and simply admire it. A woman feels that she is part of it, and must throw herself into it with zest. Moreover, she recognizes—and this is the important point—that her mission is to make the world a pleasant place to live in. In all her duties about the home, she is continually giving an

artistic touch to the commonplace, and making the humdrum picturesque. By some inborn sense of harmony she feels that, to be consistent, she must operate upon herself as well as upon the world around her. If she is to render charming everything that she touches, she instinctively feels that she must herself be pleasing. And at this point she discovers, not without a pang of satisfaction, that the universe is at her beck and call. As Coventry Patmore put it long ago:

> No splendor 'neath the sky's proud dome
> But serves for her familiar wear;
> The far-fetched diamond finds its home
> Flashing and smouldering in her hair;
> For her the seas their pearls reveal;
> Art and strange lands her pomp supply
> With purple, chrome, and cochineal,
> Ochre, and lapus lazuli;
> The worm its golden woof presents;
> Whatever runs, flies, dives, or delves,
> All doff for her their ornaments,
> Which suit her better than themselves;
> And all, by this their power to give,
> Proving her right to take, proclaim
> Her beauty's clear prerogative
> To profit so by Eden's blame.

When a woman sets herself to make herself—and everything else—charming, she finds the entire universe placing itself at her command; and the draper is simply the officer who waits upon her ministry.

When Chum Andrews is a few years older, he

will recognize that the customers who throng his counter are not all actuated by vanity. Some of the deepest and the finest traits in human nature may drive a man—or a woman—to the draper. Has not Mr. C. J. Dennis told us the story of 'Jim of the Hills'? Jim is a timber-worker; he is employed at a sawmill. One day, while Jim is busy at his saw, a group of visitors enter the mill.

> There were others in the party, but the one that got my stare
> Was her with two brown laughin' eyes, and sunlight in her hair.

Jim, dazzled by the sudden apparition of so much loveliness, trips over some timber and falls against the machine.

> Next thing I know the boss is there, an' talkin' fine and good,
> Explainin' to the visitors how trees are made of wood.
> They murmur things like 'Marvellous!' an' 'What a monster tree!'
> An' then the one with sunlit hair comes right bang up to me.
> 'I saw you fall,' she sort of sung; you couldn't say she talked,
> For her voice had springtime in it, like the way she looked and walked.
> 'I saw you fall,' she sung at me; 'I hope you were not hurt';
> An' suddenly I was aware I wore my oldest shirt.

Now here is a striking and significant thing! As soon as Jim sees the face that, to him, is sweeter than all other faces, and hears the voice that is melodious with springtime song, he thinks of—*his shirt!* And we may be sure that, very shortly

afterward, Jim was numbered among the customers of the draper! The draper's assistant saw a burly young worker from the sawmill come into the shop and ask for a shirt; he never dreamed of the sunlit hair and the springtime voice that lay behind the prosaic request.

When Chum Andrews comes to make such discoveries as this, his eyes will be suddenly opened. He will see that the romance represented by Jim and his shirt is but a spark and a scintillation of the greatest romance of all. A tremendous principle lies behind it. You might have told Jim a hundred times that he was going to work in a worn-out shirt, he would have taken no notice. But the moment he saw the sunlit hair and heard the springtime voice, then suddenly he was aware he wore his oldest shirt! You might have told a certain young Jew a hundred times that he was a man of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips, he would have taken no notice. But when he saw the Lord high and lifted up, His train filling the temple, he cried out, 'Woe is me, for I am undone!' You might have spoken to Peter a hundred times about his waywardness and unbelief, he would have taken no notice. But when he saw the Son of God displaying His divine authority over land and sea, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' Chum Andrews must not hastily conclude that there is nothing but vanity in drapery.

V

BREAKING-UP

'HURRAH! We've broken up!'

Down went the big bundle of books with a bang on the table, and out she whirled in a flurry of glee to join her playmates in a romp and a frolic on the strength of it. The examinations were all over; the end of the term had come; they had broken up!

It is an agreeable flutter. Many circumstances conspire to make the ceremony one of general merriment and boisterous hilarity. The teachers, whose duties became increasingly arduous as the year drew to its close, are happy in the enjoyment of a respite from the tasks that have engrossed all their energies; the successful scholars have been presented with their laurels and are elated at receiving the congratulations of their friends; others, to whose brows no such honors have come, are glad to be able to leave their desks and their drudgery and to forget the dreariness and disappointment of it all. And so there has been a tossing up of caps; a patient toleration of speeches; a disposition to give three cheers for anybody and everybody on the slightest possible provocation; and, at last, a trooping helter-skelter from the familiar precincts with the gleeful sensation that for several long, leisurely midsummer

weeks the place that has known them will know them no more.

But teachers who take their work at all seriously —and such teachers are not rare—know that the breaking-up is not the lighthearted affair that, on the face of it, it seems to be. We may break things up, and put them together again; but they are never again quite what they were before. Every teacher and every scholar knows that the old school will be a new place after the long vacation. There will probably be changes in the staff. A lady teacher is leaving to be married; one of the masters is going to a still more responsible post. The classes themselves will be shuffled and rearranged. Some children will be advanced to higher forms; while others will be kept back for further instruction in the old subjects. There will be new text-books and new themes. Instead of continuing the study of Japan, the geography classes will find themselves concerned with South America; the young historians will turn their backs on the Tudors and make the acquaintance of the Stuarts; and other classes will share in some novelty of a similar kind. All this is attractive so far as it goes; but it means a severance from the familiar routine, a digression from the well-trodden path; and we never say farewell to old associations without a sigh. And then —and here the pathos of the breaking-up approaches genuine poignancy—there are the scholars who are not returning after the vacation. Schooldays only

come once in a lifetime; and for these young people the great and never-to-be-forgotten experience has come to an abrupt end. Viewed from this standpoint, the breaking-up is irreparable.

> Scattered to East and West and North,
> Some with a light heart; some with a stout,
> Each to the battle of life goes forth,
> And, all alone, they must fight it out.
> Not in the sunshine, not in the rain,
> Not in the night of the stars untold,
> Shall we ever all meet again,
> Or be as we were in the days of old.

Stanley, in his great *Life of Dr. Arnold*, describes the sadness of the famous Rugby headmaster at taking farewell of his senior pupils. All Arnold's geese were swans. Every boy that came to Rugby was a potential Prime Minister in the eyes of the master. This being so, there were two days that Arnold could never face without the deepest emotion—the day on which he received a boy and the day on which he saw the last of him. 'It is a most touching thing to me,' he said, 'to receive a new fellow from his father; I do not know anything which affects me more.' This was in one of his earliest years at Rugby; but the feeling never wore off. 'No,' he exclaimed, toward the end, 'if ever I could receive a new boy from his father without emotion, I should think it was high time to be off.' And when the day came on which the same boy entered the historic room to say good-bye, the same emotions rushed back upon the master's mind in an

accentuated and intensified degree. The boys and girls who are leaving school at the end of the term are not only passing through an intellectual crisis; there is something deeper. During their school-days they have passed from infancy to adolescence. The soul of the child has awakened, and he is now at the most romantic stage of his youthful experience. He is seeing visions and dreaming dreams. He is like a knight riding forth in search of adventure. Who can look back upon the day on which he left the old school without recalling the rose-tinted prospects that fired the imagination on that day?

I knew that my childhood was over, a call came out of the vast,
And the love that I had in the old time, like beauty in twilight, was past,
I was fired by a Danaan whisper of battles afar in the world,
And my thought was no longer of peace, for the banners in dream were unfurled;
And I passed from the council of stars and of hills to a life that was new,
And I bade to the stars and the mountains a tremendous long adieu.
I shall war like the bright Hound of Ulla, with princes of earth and of sky,
For my dream is to conquer the heaven, and battle for kingdoms on high.

The teacher who sees his protégé fare forth in this high spirit may be pardoned if he indulges in a little heart-searching as to his own share in the young knight's equipment.

But, after all, the breaking-up of the school, with

its lusty laughter and its secret tears, is merely a reflection, as in a mirror, of one of life's most fundamental laws. In his *Pickwick Papers* Charles Dickens describes the famous Christmas party at Dingley Dell. The whole chapter is a romp; but it comes to an end. 'The jovial party broke up next morning,' Dickens tells us, with evident sadness. 'Breakings-up, he goes on to say, 'are capital things in our school-days, but in after-life they are painful enough. Death, self-interest, and fortune's changes are every day breaking up many a happy group and scattering them far and wide, and the boys and girls never come back again.' It is, as I have said, a law of life, and a very necessary one. The bird first teaches her fledglings to feed and then she teaches them to fly. The cosy nest is only built to be broken. Mrs. Hemans, in her 'Graves of a Household,' has told the story in another way. Once 'the same fond mother bent at night o'er each fair sleeping brow.' Then came, again and again, the call of the vast. And now—'one 'midst the forests of the West by a dark stream is laid'; 'the sea, the blue, lone sea, hath one, he lies where pearls lie deep'; 'one sleeps where southern vines are drest, on a blood-red field of Spain'; and one—'she faded 'midst Italian flowers, the last of that bright band.'

> And parted thus, they rest, who played
> Beneath the same green tree,
> Whose voices mingled as they prayed
> Around one parent knee.

Yes, it is a necessary law. It is only by the scattering of the children to all the continents and islands of the world that the fragrant atmosphere of the old home is carried far and wide. The schoolmaster is conscious of a touch of sadness as he sees his most promising pupils pass from the familiar precincts for the last time; but he comforts himself with the reflection that it is by means of such partings that his own influence grows in volume and gradually becomes world-wide.

Breaking-up is the salvation of the world. The birds know that. The nest is a lovely place, but it is a dangerous place. A nest, however skilfully placed, is a conspicuous affair. The nest advertises the whereabouts of the birds, and especially of the young birds. Hawks see it from above, and take the first opportunity of swooping down upon it. Rats, otters, weasels, stoats, and snakes see it from the ground beneath, and creep stealthily up to despoil it. Boys espy it as they pass whistling along the road near by, and are soon clambering up among the branches to capture it. And so it comes about that the vast majority of birds—four out of five at least—are destroyed before they have learned to fly. Safety only comes with the breaking-up. The young birds learn at length to use their wings. One by one they vanish, and return to the old familiar bough no more. The parent birds forsake the nest in which they have known such felicity and such terror. The breaking-up is complete and the birds are safe at last.

Nations are saved as the birds are saved—by breaking-up. England is a charming country, with a story more thrilling than the greatest romance. But it is not her idyllic landscapes nor her encrusted traditions that have converted her into a vast and mighty Empire. There came into the life of the English people an experience exactly akin to the experience of the parent birds when their fledglings fly. It came very suddenly; such experiences always do. Sometimes all the young birds take their departure on the same day; there is rarely more than a day or two between the going of the first and the flight of the last. So was it with England. All at once, before anybody suspected what was happening, the sons of the nation went out to the four quarters of the globe, and, lo, the nation became an Empire! It was all a matter of months. In 1757 Wolfe sailed West, gained after awhile his memorable victory at Quebec, and gave us Canada! In that selfsame year, 1757, Clive, having sailed East, won the battle of Plassey and gave us India! Could anything have been more dramatic? And, as though this were not enough, Captain Cook was, at the same moment, busily preparing to sail south on those adventurous voyages that were destined to add these Austral lands to the geography alike of the Empire and the world! Out they went, one by one, Wolfe, Clive, Cook, and half a dozen others, like sturdy fledglings quitting the parent nest! What a breaking-up! And that breaking-up was followed

by a still greater one. For in the wake of the pioneers and empire-builders came the emigrant ships. The English population drifted overseas; we became a nation afloat; and thus the Empire came into being. We were saved from littleness by breaking-up.

So, for that matter, was the Church; and at the very selfsame time; and in the very selfsame way. I said just now that, like the birds from the nest in the elms, the young Englishmen who built the Empire all fared forth at about the same time. And, strangely enough before the heroes of Plassey and Quebec were back in England, and while Captain Cook was still preparing for his amazing voyagings, William Carey was born! The one unforgettable lesson that William Carey taught the Church was that she could only be saved by breaking-up. When her sons and daughters left the old sanctuaries behind them, and crossed with the gospel every continent and ocean, then, he said, the day of the Church's triumph would have dawned.

The Church has learned the same lesson since in other ways. She knows that there is no brotherhood on earth like the hallowed fellowship of her communion. Minister and people meet together, perhaps around a table whose snowy cloth is surmounted by the simple yet awful mysteries of Christian devotion, and so sacred is the rapture of that gracious experience that they feel as though they have left this mundane world behind them.

Here, here on eagle wings they soar,
And time and space seem all no more;
Here heaven comes down their souls to greet,
And glory crowns the Mercy-seat!

Would that this felicity could last for ever! All are as happy as the birds in their nest on the bough. But it is impossible. Like the birds, they must break up. The very next morning the postman hands the minister a letter. It is from a prominent member of the congregation, who writes to say that he has regretfully resolved to move, with all his family, to a country town two hundred miles away. A young fellow, a member of the Bible-class, who holds a position in a local bank, calls a few hours later to say that he has been promoted to a responsible post in another branch. In the afternoon the minister officiates at the wedding of a young lady who has proved herself a most capable and devoted teacher in the Sunday school. She is marrying a young farmer from up-country, and is going now to her new home out-back. The minister thinks wistfully of the beautiful service of the previous evening, and feels that everything is breaking-up. But let him take heart. It is by way of the breaking-up that the schoolmaster reaps the fruit of his life-work. It was by way of the breaking-up that the birds were saved from extinction. It was by way of the breaking-up that England became a far-flung Empire, mighty, opulent, and free. And it was by way of the breaking-up that the Church herself

became imperial and triumphant. May not the minister's heart-breaking experience be but the prelude to some equally notable achievement? It is possible that, by being broken up, the fragrant influence of those lovely services will be scattered and distributed until the whole world is enriched by their inspiration and their charm. The family that is moving into the provincial town will endeavor to transplant, into the neighborhood to which they go, the choicest elements in the life of the church they leave behind them. The young man in the bank will reinforce the Bible-class of his new church, and will be able, out of his wealthy experience in the old one, to contribute materilly to its ampler efficiency and success. And, in correspondence with his old class-mates, he will help them with some ideas suggested by his new environment. The bride, in her new home in the bush, will think fondly of the old class and the old school, and will perpetuate and extend its influence by gathering about her knee on Sunday the children of the district in which she is now settled. Breakings-up are painful things, but so are births. Without births the race would become extinct in a single generation; and without breakings-up we should fall into uttermost stagnation and decay.

'Hurrah! We've broken up!' cried this young madcap who set me scribbling. It is a great thing to greet life's breakings-up with a smile and a cheer.

VI

WISHING-TIME

HERE'S a welcome to Wishing-time! A good word for Wishing-time! For Christmas-time is Wishing-time all the world over! Let it come to us, as it came to us in the old Homeland, in the white robes of winter-time—the snow-man in the garden and the snowballs on the street; the skating on the lake and the frosty walk to church; the snapdragons in the hall and the ghost-story in the flickering fire-light! Or let it come to us, as it comes to us beneath these southern stars, in all the golden glory of high summer-time—a flutter of white dresses and red roses, a festival of strawberries and cream! In one respect at least the season never changes. Come when it will, it comes in a whirlwind of wishes. Summer-time or winter-time, Christmas-time is Wishing-time! Sitting here on the lawn, then, surrounded by carnations and butterflies, with Christmas just behind me, and the New Year just ahead, I welcome once more the world's great Wishing-time.

I love to be out on the street on the night before Christmas. Christmas Eve, this year, was a fierce and sultry day. Few people cared to venture into the blazing heat of the afternoon sun. But in the cool of the evening everybody was abroad. It was difficult to jostle one's way along. For the move-

ments of the throng were not regular. Friends met friends; groups quickly formed, and the stream of traffic became blocked in consequence. But as I drifted along on the current of the crowd, and caught the fragments of conversation that fell upon my ears in passing, it occurred to me that everybody was wishing.

'Wish you a Merry Christmas!'

'A Happy New Year!'

'Compliments of the season!'

Clearly, then, Christmas-time is Wishing-time! At this season of the year we all become experts in the art of wishing. If we do not do it well, it is certainly not for want of practice. We are at it from early morning until late at night. A seasonable greeting is tucked into the closing sentences of every letter that we write; every handshake is accompanied by the expression of a timely wish; and even if, in passing each other on the streets, we do not pause to shake hands, we at least find time to toss our good wishes to each other as we hurry on. A survey of the missives that, morning by morning, the postman brings, or a glance into any stationer's window, shows that all the resources of poetry and all the ingenuity of art have been exploited in order that our genius for wishing may find dainty and elegant expression. We flash out wishes with every nod of the head, with every glance of the eye, with every stroke of the pen. We breathe out wishes as the flowers breathe fragrance.

We radiate wishes as the stars radiate light. Christmas invariably comes in, and the old year goes out, to the accompaniment of a perfect hurricane of wishes! I can almost fancy that, even as I write, the blackbird in the wattle is calling wishes, wishes, wishes to the starlings on the lawn. There are wishes everywhere!

And yet, after all, Christmas-time only gives us the opportunity of doing, on a grander scale than usual, what we love at any time to do. Wishing-time, come when it will, is always a welcome time. There is something in the very act and article of wishing that appeals to our innate sense of wonder and mystery. Was it not one of the earliest fascinations of childhood? How we used to covet the wishbone whenever poultry adorned the table! I like to think that the ceremony of the breaking of the wishbone imparted an additional piquancy to the enjoyment of even Bob Cratchit's incomparable Christmas goose! To whose lot, I wonder, did that wishbone fall? Perhaps Bob got it! If so, we may be sure that his glance, as he framed his wish, fell upon Tiny Tim—Tiny Tim with the iron supports on his frail limbs and the sad little crutches by his side. And if the wishbone came to any other plate than Bob's, I feel certain that the happy wisher wished for poor Bob himself a more kindly treatment at the hands of Mr. Scrooge, and never for a moment dreamed that his wild wish was to be so swiftly and dramatically fulfilled!

Nor was the wishbone the only treasure of the kind. There were the kisses in the cups! How we welcomed the time-honored authority for a wish whenever we found it floating in the fragrant tea! If we passed a white horse on a wet day, or saw the new moon for the first time through a pane of glass, how glad we were that wishing-time had come! It was one of the high felicities of infancy, but it was not left behind with the toys and trifles of the nursery. A traveller might scour the five continents without lighting on a lovelier spot than Rydalmere, in the English lake country. To those who know it, what memories haunt the mind! The glorious scenery, the clear and shimmering waters, the winding road, the crumbling old grey wall, and, most easily remembered of all, the Wishing Gate! As the visitor approaches this romantic spot he notices that its stones have been worn by the feet of tens of thousands of wistful wishers. Generation after generation, all kinds and conditions of men—and women—have made a pilgrimage to the Wishing Gate. There may have been a dash of superstition in the motives that brought them; they may have smiled at their own credulity as they stood beside the gate and wished, but, however that may be, they came. The ingrained propensity for wishing proved stronger than the soberer dictates of the reason or the heart. If only those well-worn stones could have read the secrets of the pilgrims who, through the centuries, have stood there, and if only

they could repeat the fond wishes that have there been uttered, what a medley of tragedy and comedy, of smiles and tears, would be pitilessly exposed! As we contemplate such a spectacle, it is easy enough to be cynical. But people who live in glass houses must not throw stones. We who are just now busy in framing good wishes with which to adorn every sentence that we utter and every letter that we write can scarcely regard with a mere curl of the lip the things that have happened at the Wishing Gate. The practical question is: Can we transfer the whole matter from the realm of vapid sentimentality to that of sober sense? Is there a way of wishing sanely, scientifically, soberly, and well?

Wishing is cheap and easy, and, for that reason, in youth, at any rate, we wish rashly, thoughtlessly, wildly. We do not pause to ask ourselves if the happiness that we covet could not be compassed by some means less elaborate than the wish we have expressed. A small boy notices that a soldier wears a handsome uniform. He therefore wishes to be a soldier. He does not stop to consider that a soldier's life may not be suited to his tastes and capabilities, and that a fine suit of clothes may be obtained without deflecting his entire career in order to secure it. Richard Whiteing, the eminent author and journalist, says that some years ago he met an old costerwoman who was most ardently wishing herself the Queen of England. Mr. Whiteing asked her why. 'Oh,' the old lady replied, 'it isn't because of her

'orses, for, if I were the Queen, I would have a donkey-cart with red wheels; and it isn't because of her band of musicians on 'orseback which goes ahead of the 'orseguards, for I'd much rather 'ave a Hiltilian with a 'and-organ; but just think, if the Queen wakes up at three o'clock in the morning and wants a bite to eat, she can just touch a bell and 'ave *beef and boiled cabbage* right away!' Commenting upon the incident, Mr. Whiteing hazards the conjecture that many of us are wishing ourselves kings and queens when, as a matter of fact, we could get all the happiness that we are hankering after by ordering a little more *beef and cabbage!*

We make the same mistake in forming our New Year resolutions. To highly resolve is part of the sacrament of living. But about this time of the year we badly overdo it. We go in for more good resolutions than we can reasonably hope, in three hundred and sixty-five short days, to translate into experience. Toward the end of December we resolve, in a free and easy kind of way, that in the New Year we will really and truly be good. We will make our old mistakes no more. We will actually realize our ideals at last. It is all too nebulous, too general, too indefinite. We do protest too much. If our determination to be good means anything at all, it means that we will, in one brief year, develop *all* the virtues and weed out *all* the vices. The graces are to spring up in our souls like mushrooms on a misty morning; the frailties

are to vanish as completely as though a cloud of locusts had devoured them in the night. It is not human. We are demanding too much of ourselves. We are like a man who, in the exuberance of having opened a bank-account, sits down and writes out checks for everybody. The account will not stand it. He must reckon with the limitations of the case. And so must we. One of the old masters used to say that if each of us would set to work to cultivate one new virtue, or weed out one old vice each year, we should be saints in no time.

Happily, however, the years teach us wisdom. We learn in time to restrain our easy-going resolutions and to moderate our wanton ways of wishing. We give up crying for the moon. We discover that there is other wealth in the world besides the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow. If it is beef and cabbage that we want, we wish for beef and cabbage rather than for crown and castles. We learn to task ourselves bluntly what it is that we need to make us happy, and we ask for *that* rather than for some romantically extravagant and absurdly impossible set of conditions that will incidentally include *that*. 'Should you like to hear,' asks the Autocrat of the Breakfast-table, 'should you like to hear what moderate wishes life brings one to at last? I used to be very ambitious. In all my fancies I was wasteful, extravagant, luxurious. I read too much in the *Arabian Nights*. Must have the wonderful lamp. Couldn't do without the

magic ring. Oh, to exercise each morning on the brazen horse! I longed to plump down into castles as full of little milk-white princesses as a nest is of young sparrows. They must all love me dearly and at once! It was a charming idea of life,' he says, 'but too highly colored for the reality.' And then he tells how the years taught him to wish moderately, soberly, sensibly, and well. 'I have outgrown all this kind of thing,' he says; and, as though to show that the poetry of life did not vanish with the fading of his youthful dream, he breaks into song as he describes his later longings. 'I think,' he observes, 'that you will be willing to hear some lines which embody the subdued and limited desires of my maturity.

Little I ask: my wants are few;
I only wish a hut of stone
(A very plain brown stone will do)
That I may call my own—
And close at hand is such a one,
In yonder street that fronts the sun.'

He goes on to covet plain food and plenty of it; as much money as he really needs, with perhaps a trifle over; a cosy chair, a couple of pipes, and a violin; and with all these the power to appreciate the boon of a simple taste and a mind content. It is obvious that wishes so shrewdly managed and so strictly disciplined are scarcely likely to pave the way for any very crushing disappointment.

The Bible bristles with astonishments. One of its greatest surprises is its amazing economy in this

matter of wishing. Indeed, I am not sure that a single clear-cut case of wishing occurs in its pages. The man who, startled by this statement, reaches down his concordance in order to test my accuracy, will make quite a number of interesting discoveries. He will find, to begin with, that the word is extremely rare. He will find that, even where the Authorized Version employs it, the later translations have substituted some other term. He will find that such wishes as do appear are all of them remarkable for their modesty; each is well within the bounds of possibility. He will find, too, that all the wishes are unselfish wishes, wishes for others rather than for the wisher. But as he carefully inspects this very small but very instructive collection of mental records, he will come with a start upon one tremendous yet half-formed wish that will send a shudder through all his frame. Its very incompleteness is impressive; it stands like some vast colossus that the sculptors never lived to finish. *'I could have wished,'* says Paul, *'that I were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsfolk according to the flesh.'* Coleridge tells us in his *Table Talk* that when he read these words to a friend of his, a Jew at Ramsgate, the old man burst into tears. 'Any Jew of sensibility,' the poet adds, 'must be deeply impressed by them.' To be sure! For when a man can wish as nobly as that, we all creep to his feet and seek to learn from him the secret of his splendid wishing.

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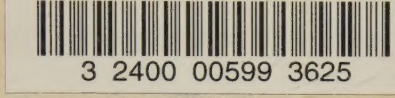
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